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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

### **DEFENSE IMPLICATIONS OF A NUCLEAR IRAN FOR TURKEY**

by

Erkan Arslan

December 2007

Co-Advisors:

James A. Russell  
Abbas Kadhim

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**DEFENSE IMPLICATIONS OF A NUCLEAR IRAN FOR TURKEY**

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First Lieutenant, Turkish Air Force  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(DEFENSE DECISION-MAKING & PLANNING)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Iran's possible acquisition of nuclear weapons, along with more assertive Iranian foreign policies, poses new security challenges for Turkey in the Middle East. A nuclear-weapons-capable Iran, with its important strategic position, would pose a great danger to peace and stability in the Middle East. An Iran with the capability of mass destruction would fundamentally alter the balance of power, and this situation is not acceptable for Turkey's security.

Turkey expects Iran to adopt a more moderate and cooperative approach in the diplomatic negotiations over its nuclear program. For this reason, Turkey has adopted a soft-diplomacy approach against Iran's nuclear program. This ambiguous diplomacy against nuclear weapons, however, does not provide a clear definition of Turkey's goals or policies with sets of political actions to deter Iran's development of weapons of mass destruction. What policy should Turkey adopt against the Iran nuclear crisis? This thesis will attempt to answer this question in terms of shaping Turkey's state policy against a nuclear Iran, evaluating the defense options of Turkey, and giving policy recommendations for the near-future situation in the region.



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Iran's possible acquisition of nuclear weapons, along with more assertive Iranian foreign policies, poses new security challenges for Turkey in the Middle East. Turkey expects Iran to adopt a more moderate and cooperative approach in the diplomatic negotiations over its nuclear program. As Turkish Prime Minister Recep T. Erdogan stated in a press conference, "The continuation of Iran's nuclear program for peaceful ends is a natural right, but it is impossible to support it if it concerns the development of weapons of mass destruction."<sup>1</sup> To this end, Turkey has adopted a soft diplomacy approach against Iran's nuclear program. But this ambiguous diplomacy against nuclear weapons does not provide a clear definition of Turkey's goals or a framework for policies with sets of political actions to deter Iran's development of weapons of mass destruction.

What policy should Turkey adopt against the Iran nuclear crisis? This thesis will attempt to answer this question in terms of shaping Turkey's state policy against a nuclear Iran, evaluating the defense options of Turkey, and giving policy recommendations for the near-future situation in the region.

### **A. IMPORTANCE**

A nuclear-weapons-capable Iran — with its important strategic position in the Middle East, its explicit threat against Israel, and its aggressive bid for dominance of the world's richest oil region — would pose a great danger to peace and stability in the Middle East. An Iran with the capability of mass destruction would fundamentally alter the balance of power, and that would be unacceptable for Turkey's security.

Turkey has adopted a conventional military force for supporting and promoting peace and deterring instability in the fragile region of the Middle East. Because it would obviously lose bargaining leverage against Iran, Turkey must now, for its own security, play a more effective role in containing Iran's nuclear ambitions.

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<sup>1</sup> Yigal Schleifer, "Caught in the Fray: Turkey Enters Debate on Iran's Nuclear Program," *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 February 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0202/p05s01-woeu.html> (accessed 13 April 2007).





Figure 1. Map of Turkey and Iran<sup>2</sup>

Over the past decade, Iran has managed to acquire many of the parts and plants that are needed to make a nuclear device. Various motivating factors drive Iran towards a nuclear path. The first is the insecurity perception in the Middle East. Iran is surrounded with a neighborhood of uncertainty and instability. After being attacked with chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq war, and with the rise of new nuclear states such as India and Pakistan, Iran believes that it is living in a dangerous neighborhood. It lives with fragile, unstable, and newly emerged states such as Iraq and Afghanistan, but Iran also feels insecure surrounded by U.S. forces. Since the fall of the Shah and the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the United States and Iran have had an uneasy relationship of fighting, threatening, or just ignoring each other.<sup>3</sup> Being labeled as the “Axis of Evil,” Iran feels that it is threatened by Israel and the United States.

<sup>2</sup> Middle East Map, University of Texas Libraries, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/aj.html> (accessed 25 October 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Michael L. Farmer, *Why Iran Proliferates*, M.A. thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005, 35.

Another motivator for Iran is political. Iran perceives its nuclear program as leverage in international politics. With a declared nuclear weapon or weapons program, Iran believes that it would increase its political bargaining power in the global political arena. The example of North Korea's emergence and the fate of Saddam's Iraq give an exclusive motivation to Iran. While North Korea has managed to claim a nuclear posture without demonstrating its capabilities, Saddam's Iraq could not deter the United States from launching an attack.

Iran's nuclear posture is also motivated internally and individually by both "the nuclear myth makers" and the nuclear insecurity myth. As Charles C. Mayer proposes in his thesis, "Nuclear myth makers are societal elites that convince governmental leaders of the 'military security and political power' provided by nuclear weapons."<sup>4</sup> He also argues that

Iran also uses the nuclear insecurity myth to assure the international community that Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons; that they are against the Islamic faith; that they would only make Iran more vulnerable; but that Iran has the right to develop all forms of civilian nuclear energy.<sup>5</sup>

The regime also uses the nuclear quest to mitigate internal opposition and divert attention from economic problems related to the low prosperity of its people. In this manner, Tehran tries to exploit, as Kenneth M. Pollack states, the "Islamic and Persian pride" of its people. The Iranians see themselves as the descendants of the Persian Empire; many Iranians believe that their country's history, experience, and natural resources mandate its role as one of the world's great powers, and the dominant force in southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Peter R. Lavoy, "Nuclear Myths and the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation," in *The Proliferation Puzzle: Why Nuclear Weapons Spread and What Results*, ed. Zachary S. Davis and Benjamin Frankel (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 199, cited in Charles C. Mayer, *National Security To Nationalist Myth: Why Iran Wants Nuclear Weapons*, M.A. thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2004, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Iranian Nuclear Program: Motivations and Priorities," (testimony presented at The Brookings Institution before Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 17 May 2006), <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2006/PollackTestimony060517.pdf> (accessed 25 October 2007).

Although Iranian officials insist that Iran's ambitions are limited to nuclear energy, it is believed that the regime seeks to acquire weapons of mass destruction to use for political purposes and dominance in the region. A nuclear Iran's dominance is not acceptable for the United States and other major, oil-dependent European countries. Possible restrictions of Iran on its oil distribution would endanger the vital interests of the United States and other oil-dependent countries.<sup>7</sup> Because the price of oil is global, the increase of oil prices in the Middle East would immediately have an impact on the price in global oil markets.<sup>8</sup>

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran is considered the main sponsor of terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and al-Qaeda.<sup>9</sup> Especially with strong backing by Iran, Hezbollah is believed to have caused the Lebanon war with Israel. As A. Alfoneh argues in his article, "Moreover, the Iranian regime continues to embrace suicide terrorism as an important component of its military doctrine. . . . In order to promote suicide bombing and other terrorism, the regime's theoreticians have utilized religion both to recruit suicide bombers and to justify their actions."<sup>10</sup> A nuclear Iran might share weapons or technology leading to an atomic Hezbollah or al-Qaeda, which could have catastrophic results for global security and dangerous effects on the security of Turkey as a close neighbor to Iran.

Lastly, a nuclear Iran would ignite a new arms race in the Middle East. As Michael L. Farmer argues in his thesis: "Should Iran develop nuclear weapons, there is a possibility that another Persian Gulf country (Saudi Arabia) would begin work on a 'Sunni' bomb to equalize the 'Shi'a' weapon."<sup>11</sup> Another possibility may be Turkey's

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<sup>7</sup> Karl Vick, "Iran Renews Threat to Withhold Oil: Bolton Issues Warning; Vote by U.N. Atomic Agency Looms," *Washington Post*, 6 March 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/05/AR2006030500992.html> (accessed 14 April 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Farmer, "Why Iran Proliferates," 2.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran's Support of the Hezbollah in Lebanon*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 15 July 2006, 10, [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/060715\\_hezbollah.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/060715_hezbollah.pdf) (accessed 18 May 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Ali Alfoneh, "Iran's Suicide Brigades Terrorism Resurgent," *Middle East Quarterly* 14, no.1 (Winter 2007), <http://www.meforum.org/article/1059> (accessed 11 April 2007).

<sup>11</sup> James Russell, "Saudi Arabia in the 21st Century: A New Security Dilemma," *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 67, cited in Farmer, "Why Iran Proliferates," 2.

quest for nuclear capabilities to counterbalance Iran. Although Turkey disapproves of possessing and using nuclear weapons, Turkey may consider acquiring nuclear weapons capability if faced with provocative Iranian policies. But, as commonly agreed, this would not help to stabilize the Middle East, and it would endanger the possibility of peace in the region. As a result, being a close neighbor to the Middle East, Turkey must define its political approach to Iran, reconsider its balance of options if necessary, and be ready for the harsh consequences of a possible intervention against Iran, remembering the last two Gulf Wars and their deteriorating effects on Turkey's security and economy.

## **B. TURKEY'S THREAT PERCEPTIONS**

For almost fifty years, Turkey has been exposed to proliferation developments on its borders and nuclear weapons deployed on its territory. This exposure resulted from having borders with potential nuclear states such as Syria and Iraq, and also because of having lived under the protective umbrella of NATO, mainly supported by the United States in the Cold War era. Although not being a nuclear state and not likely to become one in the near future, Turkey is highly aware of the instability of the Middle East.

Turkey has been a security-conscious state throughout its modern era. Having watched the recurring disputes in the Middle East, Turkey has adopted a more sensitive approach to threats of weapons of mass destruction. Iran and Turkey have a history of peace from the era of Ottoman Empire and the close economic and political relationships formed by the current administration. Despite the efforts of Turkish Prime Minister Recep T. Erdogan with Iran, however, a nuclear or near-nuclear Iran would have a great chance of posing direct and indirect challenges to the security concerns of Turkey. This would be especially true if the Iranian regime pursued assertive and provocative strategies in the Middle East.

Although the relations between Iran and Turkey have been generally peaceful since the Ottoman Empire, this relationship is best defined as fragile peace.<sup>12</sup> Common wisdom suggests that peace between Iran and Turkey is in fact maintained by both

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<sup>12</sup> Yigal Schleifer, "Caught in the Fray."

military and political equilibrium. Both states have traditionally seen each other as status quo powers. Pre-revolutionary Iran had much in common with the secular, modernizing, Western-oriented society Ataturk had promoted in Turkey.<sup>13</sup> However, this relationship was occasionally strained by various issues after the revolution in Iran. After adopting a modernized and secular state policy, Turkey has always sought ways to improve ties with Western society, despite being a Muslim majority nation. In this manner, it was the first nation in the Middle East to recognize the State of Israel. Such an act was unacceptable to Iran. On the other hand, Iran was believed to be pursuing exploitation of Sunni-Shii differences and dominating the fundamentalist Islamic organizations within Turkey.

Turkey's main instability concerns are formed around Islamic fundamentalism, a possible Sunni-Shii conflict in its borders, and separatist Kurdish movements in Northern Iraq. Turkey's relatively stable relations with Iran slowly started to change after the Iranian revolution.<sup>14</sup> Turkey's secular elites are most concerned about the Islamic radicalism from Iran. This concern is mainly caused by Iranian financial support and other supports of Islamic movements. Such concerns, despite being marginal threats to Turkey's domestic security, are seen as undesirable threats by Turkey's secular elites. Another possibility for a dispute might be Iran's backing of Kurdish separatism and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) against Turkey.<sup>15</sup> This issue is unlikely, however, because Iran also sees the Kurdish issue as a detrimental factor for its own ethnic structure and domestic security. Recently, both countries have cooperated in operations against PKK camps on their borders.

On the other hand, Iran also has some concerns regarding Turkey, although none have caused a direct risk of conflict. Turkey has the potential to support separatism among Turkmens in Southern Azerbaijan and within Iran at a time of instability in Iran. But Turkey, acting deliberately in this issue, has never supported those separatist

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<sup>13</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Turkey, Iran and Nuclear Risks," in *Getting Ready For A Nuclear-Ready Iran*, ed. Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson (Cambridge, MA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 96.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 97.

movements, either in Iran or in Kosovo or Chechnya.<sup>16</sup> Another concern for Iran is Turkey's Western-oriented attitude and secularism against religions. Close ties with the West, in addition to defense and security cooperation with Israel, have troubled Iranian conservatives. Israel's active participation in Turkey's defense modernization and the high degree of collaboration on training and intelligence-sharing on nuclear and missile threats is seen as a sign of developments that might eventually lead to Turkey facilitating American and Israeli intervention in Iran. This facilitation could include provision of air bases and over-flight rights for air strikes against Iran's nuclear structures. However, Turkey officially declared that it will not support a military operation that will result in hot conflicts adjacent to its borders.<sup>17</sup>

In the shadow of these potential disputes between the two countries, the first and most explicit effect of a nuclear-weapons-capable Iran would be the direct threat of Iranian short- and medium-range missiles over Turkey's soil. This threat would obviously lead Turkey to fast and practical counterbalancing options, such as expediting its missile defense program and taking a more demanding stance in its alliance options. Another threat is the possible assertive strategies of a nuclear Iran in regard to sources of disputes between Turkey and Iran. It is certain that a nuclear-weapons-capable Iran would gain more political bargaining power over Turkey in those issues. This new imbalance of power would inevitably affect the bilateral affairs regarding the Kurdish problem, energy issues in the Caucasian region, and other relations in the Middle East.

The increased political leverage Iran would have over these issues would force Turkey to go through external and internal balancing options. Internally, Turkey might be driven to pursue its own nuclear quest. This would probably cause a nuclear arms race in the region and would inevitably pose great risks both for Turkey and other Middle East countries. The race between Iran and Turkey might force Russia to enter the power debate feeling insecure against Iran and Turkey. Along with these threats, there is another difficulty for Turkey in acquiring nuclear capabilities of its own: The investment in nuclear energy and a nuclear weapon program is highly costly. Although Turkey has

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<sup>16</sup> Lesser, *"Turkey, Iran and Nuclear Risks,"* 98.

<sup>17</sup> Yigal Schleifer, *"Caught in the Fray."*

made some advances in nuclear energy, acquiring nuclear weapons is a more demanding task. Turkey is not seen as likely to start an independent nuclear capability since, along with other economic problems, it lacks the substantial civil nuclear infrastructure on which to build.<sup>18</sup> Because of this, another internal balancing option may be the reinforcement of conventional capabilities against nuclear threat, such as improved early warning and missile defense capabilities. But this option also carries the possibility of sparking counter-security concerns from its neighbors, namely Russia, Syria, and Iraq.

Turkey's external balancing options are formed around the United States, Israel, NATO, and EU alliances. Turkey most likely will enjoy multilateral consensus for containing Iran in its quest. The recent debates over participating in the EU will inevitably coerce Ankara to act in accordance with the EU political approach by imposing economic sanctions against Iran. This approach mainly has the purpose of rolling back Iran's quest for nuclear weapons. Economic sanctions, as George Perkovich and Silvia Manzanero argue, have three main aims:

First, to impose enough pain to compel Iranian leaders to change their minds and abandon nuclear weapon capabilities. Second, to reduce the perceived benefits Iran would gain from nuclear weapons and to otherwise weaken Iran. Third, drawing on the former two desired effects to punish Iran, thus deterring future proliferators.<sup>19</sup>

The main challenge to that coercive approach for a rollback, however, is to provide and maintain the international community's cooperation and support for sanctions against Iran. In the absence of effective diplomatic pressure deterring Iran from its nuclear quest by multilateral consensus, Ankara most probably would choose bandwagoning with American and Israeli strikes against Iranian nuclear and missile facilities. It is believed that the strike option's feasibility is very low indeed. The probability of success is not high, because the Iranian nuclear installations are dispersed and well-defended. On the other hand, the Israeli operational capabilities for this kind of

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<sup>18</sup> Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy Since the Cold War*, (London: Hurst and Company, 2003), 161-81, cited in Lesser, "Turkey, Iran and Nuclear Risks," 106.

<sup>19</sup> George Perkovich, Silvia Manzanero, "Iran Gets The Bomb—Then What?" in *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran*, eds. Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson (Cambridge, MA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 178.

sustained operation are very limited. Despite the fact that the United States is believed to have enough military capability to conduct such a strike effectively, it is not certain whether this military operation would stop the Iranian nuclear program permanently or delay it substantially.<sup>20</sup>

Although Ankara is strictly against proliferation of WMD, as Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul restates,

Turkey supports Iran's use of nuclear power for peaceful means. . . . However, the Iranian leadership must openly show its goodwill and convince the international community. . . . Turkey is against a military intervention and hot conflict within his neighborhood.<sup>21</sup>

Other than having a neutral, cautious, and deliberate posture against Iran, Turkey has not exhibited its explicit intentions and explained its vital thresholds versus a nuclear Iran.

### **C. THESIS ORGANIZATION**

A brief historical background on both countries, as well as the main political issues on which Turkish and Iranian foreign policy is formulated will be addressed in Chapter II. Evolution of the relations between the two countries will be examined, and near future threats of a nuclear Iran will be identified.

The internal and external counterbalancing options of Turkey against a nuclear Iran will be examined in Chapter III. Effects and shortcomings of these options for future stability in the region will be evaluated.

In Chapter IV, political and economic impacts on Turkey after a possible military strike on Iran will be analyzed in light of lessons from the two Gulf Wars that had deteriorating side effects on both Turkey's economy and the bilateral relations with the United States of America.

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<sup>20</sup> Shlomo Brom, "Is the Begin Doctrine Still a Viable Option for Israel?" in *Getting Ready For A Nuclear-Ready Iran*, eds. Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson, (Cambridge, MA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 148-9.

<sup>21</sup> "Turkey supports Iran's nuclear program," *Associated Press*.



Chapter V will summarize the conclusions and offer policy recommendations to some of the Turkish politicians who perceive a nuclear Iran as a non-threat, and to some security strategists who think that a nuclear Turkey is the best defense option against a nuclear Iran. Relying on current good economic relations and cooperation against PKK terrorism today does not necessarily guarantee a benign and cooperative nuclear Iran tomorrow. On the other hand, going nuclear after Iran is not a viable option for Turkey's role in stabilizing the region.

## II. A NUCLEAR IRAN AND ITS THREATS TO TURKEY

### A. INTRODUCTION

It has been a cliché to say that Turkey is a bridge between the East and the West; however, nothing has changed from the perspective of Turkey and its politicians. The West has serious concerns about a Muslim majority but highly secular Turkey; the East disapproves of its close ties with the United States and Israel, its military and political alliances to promote liberalism, and its secularism and its reliance on hard power to deter instability in the region when necessary. With its reliance on the West's technological hard power and economic support, and the East's resources, Turkey has adopted a foreign policy to minimize problems and maintain good relations with its neighbors. As Oleg Svet highlights:

Turkish foreign policy experts distinguish between Turkey's friends and neighbors. The United States and Israel are viewed as friends because their relationship rests on both strategic and ideological convergence. . . . Theocratic, illiberal Iran and dictatorial Syria are referred to as neighbors rather than friends, because while they may converge on some strategic interests, they oppose the values on which the Turkish state was founded.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the long absence of explicit military conflict with Iran, since the seventeenth century, Iran is referred to as “neighbor rather than friend” because Iran is seen to be undermining Turkish internal security by implicitly supporting Islamic fundamentalism and PKK terrorism. In fact, the absence of hot conflicts was maintained by a delicate balance of power based on mutual economic, political, and military parity between the two states. But, if Iran develops nuclear weapons and adopts more assertive policies against Turkey, that fragile balance will cease and give Iran more incentives to

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<sup>22</sup> Oleg Svet, Turkey's “Zero Problem” Foreign Policy: An Untenable Balancing Act,” *NIMEP Insights* 2 (Spring 2006): 71, [http://www.tuftsgloballeadership.org/NIMEP/insights/II/INSIGHTS06\\_Svet.pdf](http://www.tuftsgloballeadership.org/NIMEP/insights/II/INSIGHTS06_Svet.pdf) (accessed 14 October 2007).

use its nuclear deterrence as political leverage in its relationship with Turkey.<sup>23</sup> This chapter will identify the key issues that shape the Turkish relationship with Iran and assess the potential political, economic, and military threats that would emerge from Iran's nuclear quest.

## **B. TURKEY-IRAN RELATIONS AND ISLAMIC TRADITIONALISM**

The fragile peace between Iran and Turkey dates back to the early seventeenth century. Two rivals of the leadership in Islam—the Sunni (Islamic Orthodoxy) Ottoman Empire and the Shiite Persian Empire—struggled for dominance, especially after Shiism was adopted by the Safawi dynasty in 1501.<sup>24</sup> This adoption caused Safavid Persia to separate its ties from the orthodox Islamic community.<sup>25</sup> The different adaptations of Islam became another reason for hostility and struggle for regional hegemony between the Ottomans and Persia. Later, in the early seventeenth century, the two empires managed to reach a peaceful agreement by signing the 1639 (Kasr-I Sirin) Treaty.<sup>26</sup> The 1639 treaty, followed by 1847 Erzurum Treaty, established the Turkish-Iranian border, which remains unchanged. Although Persians occasionally tried to exploit and influence some religious communities of the Ottomans, such as the Alevis of Anatolia, Shiite expansionism was generally prevented by the Ottomans during the period.<sup>27</sup>

Recently, the balance of power has been the main source of stable relations with Iran and dictates the current policies and strategies for rivalry and influence in the Caucasus, Central Asia and for stabilization in Northern Iraq for Turkey. But the mutual parity does not necessarily explain how the two Muslim majority nations walked different

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<sup>23</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Program May Trigger the Young Turks to Think Nuclear." *Proliferation News and Resources Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (December 20, 2004), [http://www.belfercenter.org/publication/920/irans\\_nuclear\\_program\\_may\\_trigger\\_the\\_young\\_turks\\_to\\_think\\_nuclear.html?breadcrumb=%2Fexperts%2F1367%2Fmustafa\\_kibaroglu](http://www.belfercenter.org/publication/920/irans_nuclear_program_may_trigger_the_young_turks_to_think_nuclear.html?breadcrumb=%2Fexperts%2F1367%2Fmustafa_kibaroglu) (accessed 13 November 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Tayyar Ari, *Iraq, Iran, the United States and Oil (Irak, İran, ABD ve Petrol)*, 2d ed. (Istanbul: Alfa Press, 2007), 309.

<sup>25</sup> Richard H. Pfaff, "Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran," *The Western Political Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1963): 82.

<sup>26</sup> Dogu Silahcioglu, *The United States, Israel-Iran Problem and Turkey (A.B.D., İsrail-İran Denklemi ve Türkiye)* (Istanbul: Gunizi Press, 2006), 24.

paths towards the twenty-first century as a secular, democratic Turkey and an Islamic Republic of Iran under the same initial Islamic rule of the Shari'a. Turkey claims that Iran seeks to influence religious groups and motivate them against Turkey's domestic order. On the other hand, Iran sees Turkey's close strategic ties with Israel and the West as a detrimental threat to its security and to other Arab nations in the region. Therefore, it is important to review and mark the main historical and religious factors to better reveal and understand how the security concerns of the two states were formed.

Islamic traditionalism had the same effect on both communities. The social life of a Muslim was not so different in the Sunni Ottoman Empire and Shiite Iran. Although the adaptation of Shari'a (the law of Allah) in Sunni Ottoman and Shiite Iran was slightly different according to its sources of law, jurisdiction of Shari'a — which regulates political, economic, and social life — had almost the same effects on both Muslim communities. Interpretation of Islam by its followers had the same preventive effect on society for evolutionary movements. Any kind of evolutionary ideas were seen as detrimental threats to the established order. This characteristic of Islamic traditionalism has become the main obstacle for a society to change. Islamic traditionalism delayed any Western ideas from affecting the political and social order, especially in Iran.

The Shari'a law, in principle, binds all Muslims without taking nationality into account and is considered to be higher than any state organizations. However, as Richard H. Pfaff states in his article, "The Ottoman Sultans and the Qajar Shahs found it increasingly necessary to 'supplement' Shari'a law by royal decrees having the effect of laws."<sup>28</sup> Both Ottomans' and Iran's citizens included a non-Muslim population, and the harsh Shari'a rules with its lack of regulations on commercial life did not suffice to manage the non-Muslim minorities.

Ottoman Sultans benefited from national customs that reached back to earlier Turkic culture before the adoption of Islam to protect their military and administrative system from religious effects. Dependence on and maintenance of national customs (adet,

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<sup>27</sup> For a detailed discussion on Alevi in Turkey, see Niyazi Oktom, "Religion in Turkey," Brigham Young University Law Review 2002, no. 2 (January 2002): 374.

<sup>28</sup> Pfaff, "Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran," 81.

orf) has helped Turkish nationalists, called the Young Turks, to adapt the ideas of “liberty” and “nation” from the West, especially from France in the late eighteenth century.<sup>29</sup> The Ottoman nationalism that binds all Muslims and non-Muslims of the community was an obstacle before a successful and meaningful definition of this new nationalism. However, the defeat and territorial losses of the Ottoman Empire in World War I left Ottoman Turks with a relatively homogenous population in Anatolia and thus cleared this main obstacle. Later, the path for divergence from Ottoman nationalism paved the way for a successful nation-state Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa K. Atatürk. But it is important to highlight the difference in defining Atatürk’s nationalism from the Young Turks’ or other ethnic-based definitions of nationalism. Atatürk’s Turkish nationalism does not require ethnically being a Turk; but it implies the desire to live peacefully and together with the Turkish nation, which is connected with the same culture and history as that of Turkish citizens. In this manner, citizenship of Turkey is defined objectively on historical and cultural ties rather than on subjective ethnic identities.

The path for Iran towards the twentieth century was slightly different. Iranians, like Ottoman Turks, enjoyed a historic Persian identity that preceded the Muslim binding effect of Islam. Similar to Ottomans, in Iran the Shari’a law was supplemented by

A body of positive law based on the ruler’s prerogative to initiate rules for the good of the community. This prerogative, known as ‘urf,’ was resorted to continually in both countries.... Certain decisions concerning matters of state (e.g., rebellion, rioting, and murder) were almost always adjudicated by decisions based on ‘urf’... — Richard H. Pfaff.<sup>30</sup>

But, in contrast to the Ottomans, Iran was not strongly challenged by the spread of nationalism from the West because of its geographical distance. The Western impact came from Russian and British imperialism; however, they both cancelled each other and faced strong opposition from the Shiite ‘ulema. The Shiite order that lived a strong era throughout the Qajar dynasty had a strengthening effect on Iran’s Islamic traditionalism

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<sup>29</sup> Pfaff, “Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran,” 81.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

against nationalism coming from the West. Poor geographical conditions and a lack of communication facilities helped Islamic traditionalism to oppress the spread of nationalism.<sup>31</sup>

The reform movement to establish a constitution in Iran in 1906–1907 was therefore different in comparison to the Ottoman constitution of 1876, which was reinstated by the Young Turks in 1907. In contrast to the Young Turks' reform quest, Iran's reform attempt was to limit and to control the power of Shah. The reform was in fact a consolidation of Islamic traditionalism and was supported by religious order in Iran.<sup>32</sup>

During 1921–1941, Reza Shah's reforms were very similar to those of Atatürk's in Turkey; however, Shah's serious steps to create a strong central government and to extend his control over the country were limited since Shah did not enjoy the well-trained army and the support of Western-oriented and secular nationalists that Atatürk had.<sup>33</sup> Being a Shah was still Islam by definition, and in fact a strong indication of the same influential Islamic traditionalism that was in control of Shiite 'ulema. Thus, Shah's bid for promotion of Western values in Iran never reached the same level as the revolutionary and secular character of Atatürk's ideas.

After World War I, both Turkey and Iran focused on stabilizing their domestic orders and preserving good relations with each other. The new republic in Turkey in 1923 rejected its Islamic traditionalism and abandoned both its pan-Islamic and pan-Turkish ambitions. Turkey aimed to live in peace with its neighbors and concentrated on economic prosperity for modernization. Similarly, Reza Shah changed the country's name from Persia to Iran and maintained good external relations to deal with internal struggle; acquiring central control became his primary objective.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Pfaff, "Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran," 81-2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> John Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 1 (1998): 76 and Pfaff, "Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran," 87.

<sup>34</sup> Unal Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 7, no. 1 (2003): 1-2.

The Cold War era and Soviet expansionism caused Turkey and Iran to form a more cooperative relationship. Both countries feared Soviet incursion and its expansionist external policies. Thus, they adopted cooperative strategies and strengthened their ties with the West, especially with the United States. The common threat perception led the two countries to become regional allies with the Baghdad Pact (Central Treaty Organization) in 1955 and the Regional Cooperation Development (RCD) organization in 1968.<sup>35</sup> Turkey improved its military power with NATO membership, and that improvement was well beyond that of Iran. Later, Iran benefited from the 1970's oil crisis and got ambitious about becoming a regional power by acquiring massive amount of weapons. Neither, however, perceived the other's military buildups as a threat. Turkey's focus was on Greece, while Iran concentrated on Egypt and Iraq.<sup>36</sup>

The 1979 Iran revolution was a turning point for relations with Turkey. Although the Turkish government under Bulent Ecevit's administration was not late to recognize the new regime in Iran, suspicion against Iran's revolution gradually became the main factor to shape the bilateral cooperation.<sup>37</sup> Iran's role in promoting its revolutionary movements throughout the Islamic societies, and its bid for influencing religious groups and supporting anti-democratic activities in Turkey, formed a significant domestic security concern for the Turkish secular elite.<sup>38</sup> Although both sides felt the necessity to be on same track on economic cooperation, Turkey's politicians and strategists saw Iran as the enemy of its Western-oriented secular democracy and political order, and this was a major barrier for stable and good political relations.

Post-revolutionary Iran was not the same Iran that Turkey recognized and adjusted to in the height of Cold War threats. Once again, Islamic traditionalism was in formidable practice in Iran with Ayatollah R. Khomeini. The Khomeini regime showed its explicit intention to promote the values of post-revolutionary Iran and this promotion extended beyond Iran's borders. This was a highly hazardous situation for the martial law

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<sup>35</sup> Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey," 2.

<sup>36</sup> Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran Relationship," 77.

<sup>37</sup> Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey," 2.

<sup>38</sup> Silahcioglu, the United States, Israel-Iran and Turkey, 43.

that was established by the Turkish Armed Forces in 1980. The martial law came after a political turmoil and violent domestic struggle in Turkey, and its primary aim was to consolidate domestic security and reestablish the secure environment for a democratic order.<sup>39</sup>

PKK terrorism that hit Turkey after 1983 became another trust issue between Ankara and Tehran. Ankara blamed Tehran for allowing PKK terrorists to use Iranian territory as a base for their attacks on Turkey. Iran, on the other hand, accused Turkey of supporting anti-revolutionary forces, such as the Mujaheddin-e Khalq (MKO) within Iran.<sup>40</sup> Turkey's disturbance about Iranian support for the PKK or Iran's inability to control its borders for terrorist activities brought Ankara and Tehran to the brink of hot conflict.

The competition for dominance between Turkey and Iran in Central Asia and south Caucasus became another potential dispute. The sudden demise of the Soviet Union opened a window of opportunities for the two countries and they expanded their cultural and economic relations with those newly emerged states. Energy resources in the Caspian Basin and the transfer of those resources from Asia to the West formed an important issue and a possibility for a military clash between Turkey and Iran.

An outline of Turkish-Iranian relations reveals that cultural and political nuances were an important factor. Although, from time to time, they managed to cooperate for their mutual interests, their struggle to become a leading power in the region always existed. Turkish claims about Islamic fundamentalism being supported by Iran, and Turkey's discontent about PKK, influence competition in Central Asia and Caucasus, forming a great possibility for a hot conflict if Iranian officials consider weapons of mass destruction as a credible deterrent against Turkey. Examining those issues will help determine the scope of threats that would rise from a nuclear Iran.

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<sup>39</sup> Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran Relationship," 78.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



### C. ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

It is generally believed that Iran's revolution has encouraged many Islamic groups to utilize political Islam as an effective way to bring a new political and social order to Muslim communities. Furthermore, Iran is blamed for influencing and aiding Muslim revolutionary movements externally throughout militant Islamic groups in Muslim majority countries. Although Iran's role in revolutionary Islam is mostly exacerbated by "West and Arab regimes," Ankara became increasingly concerned about Iranian-led Islamic fundamentalism and saw Iran's active involvement in social Islamic debates in Turkey as an important threat to its internal security.<sup>41</sup> On 24 August 1986, Khomeini's verbal attacks on Turkey's respectful leader M. Kemal Ataturk were received as an indicator of the Iranian regime's provocation to destroy Turkey's constitutional order:

In the Islamic world, the ulama were led to believe that they had to obey the tyrants, oppressors, and the holders of naked power. Certain lackeys preferred to obey Ataturk, who destroyed the rule of Islam, instead of obeying the orders of the prophet. How can a reasonable mind accept this? Today, the ulama [in Turkey] who are the puppets of the Pharaonic forces, teach the people the orders of God and the prophet, but at the same time call on them to obey Ataturk.... How can one argue that this is consistent with the notion of [Islamic rulers] whom God ordered us to obey? Obviously, [Islamic rulers] in the real sense can only be those who follow the order of God and his messenger...<sup>42</sup>

Khomeini targeted Turkish revolution, which managed to separate Islam from the state and abolished the caliphate with establishing a Presidency of Religious Affairs (T.C. Basbakanlik Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi) to unify Islamic muftis.<sup>43</sup> The revolution in Turkey was challenged repeatedly by independent Islamic fundamentalists who could not digest the modern and independent Turkey after the Ottoman Empire. This was another provocative sign of support from Iran, according to the Turkish secular elite. On top of that, as U. Gundogan highlights:

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<sup>41</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, "Iran and the Spread of Revolutionary Islam," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 730-731 and Silahcioglu, the United States, Israel-Iran and Turkey, 43.

<sup>42</sup> Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey," 6-7.

<sup>43</sup> Pfaff, "Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran," 86.

In November 1988, the Iranian Embassy in Ankara refused to follow all other foreign missions by lowering its flag to half-mast to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Atatürk's death. This was severely criticized by the Turkish press and described as "unforgivable insolence."<sup>44</sup>

Those expressions and unfriendly acts by Iranian officials were intensely felt in the Turkish press. The Turkish press was not late to condemn and retaliate, focusing on the Shi'i nature of the Iranian revolution and indicating its propaganda activities as a quest try to establish a Shari'a order in Turkey.<sup>45</sup>

Turkish leaders were not interested in a "press war" between Iran and Turkey; however, when the Iranian regime entered the debate about the Turkish Constitutional Court's legal decision and ban—according to the Turkish Constitution—on wearing a headscarf (turban) in official places such as university campuses, this was understood as a major threat from Iran in supporting the Islamist movement in Turkey.<sup>46</sup> Protests and demonstrations were held in Turkey and many secular Turks were suspicious about Iranian support. Encouraged by Iranian officials, students also held supporting marches in Iran.<sup>47</sup> Khomeini's main agenda to safeguard the rights of Muslims everywhere was understood to interfere with internal problems of Turkey, and this was unacceptable for a sovereign state. Iran, moreover, threatened to cut economic trade with Turkey from \$2 billion to \$400 million in 1989 via Iran's Turkey ambassador.<sup>48</sup> Turkey's response was to expel Iran's ambassador from Turkey.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, Turkey faced a "twin threat" rising from political Islam and ethnic Kurdish nationalism, and this threat perception somewhat increased the influence of Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) in order to protect the continuation of a

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<sup>44</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, *Iran and the World: Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 225. Cited in Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey," 7.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 7-9.

<sup>46</sup> Robert W. Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations, 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2004), 36-7.

<sup>47</sup> Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey," 9.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations*, 37.

democratic and secular regime.<sup>50</sup> Despite the fact that those influences were highly criticized by the West from the civil-military relationship perspective, this kind of duty was and is still within the unique constitutional duties of Turkish Armed Forces. When Islamist Erbakan became prime minister in a coalition with Tansu Ciller, the leader of the center-right True Path Party, his pro-Iranian policies and religious-oriented attitude made the secular elite, namely the military, worried. As O. Oktay states in her article:

The Islamist Prime Minister Erbakan's pro-Iranian policies led to the split between the politicians and the military... he made his first foreign trip to Tehran and denied the allegations that Iran and Syria were sponsoring terrorism carried out by the separatist PKK, in spite of intelligence reports stating otherwise, given to him by the Turkish National Intelligence Agency (MIT).<sup>51</sup>

The Sincan incident also caused a turbulent atmosphere and finally became the end of Erbakan's administration.<sup>52</sup> The mayor of Sincan town, Bekir Yildiz from the Welfare's Party, held "A night for Jerusalem" in the last weekend of January 1997. Iran's ambassador Muhammed Riza Bagheri along with Mahmud Bin Yasin were among the guests, and Bagheri made a speech under the posters of Hezbollah and Hamas leaders. He criticized the United Kingdom and the United States over their "illegal" support of the "illegal state of Israel," and further condemned Turkish policies about Israel: "Those who signed agreements with the United States and Israel would, sooner or later, be penalized by Turkish youths."<sup>53</sup>

Bagheri became the second Iranian ambassador to be expelled from Turkey, and Bekir Yildiz, along with eleven other diplomats, was sentenced to imprisonment. In retaliation, Iran expelled Turkish ambassador Osman Koruturk and Turkish consul Ufuk Ozsancak.<sup>54</sup> Afterwards, the Kavakci headscarf incident caused more political turmoil in

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<sup>50</sup> Özden Z. Oktav, "Changing Security Perceptions in Turkish-Iranian Relations," *Center for Strategic Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*, Perceptions 9 (August 2004): 2.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>52</sup> Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations*, 35.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 36.

relations with Iran.<sup>55</sup> Throughout the 2000s, relations with Iran further deteriorated with Turkish claims about the evidence of Iranian financial support of Islamic fundamentalist groups and training of Hezbollah terrorists, and Iran's involvement in political assassinations within Turkey.<sup>56</sup> Tehran, in the same manner, accused Turkey of harboring an armed Iranian opposition group, the Mujahadin Khalq. Turkey saw Iranian Islamist fundamentalism and the spread of its revolution as a domestic threat to its security. Similarly, Iran perceived Turkey, with its large, conventional modern army and its secular and anti-traditional democratic order as a neighbor that was harmful and hostile to its existence.

Iran's success in spreading revolutionary Islam often faced the negative effects of competing with safeguarding Iran's own national security and especially its economic interests. Its revolutionary ideologies were deeply affected by contemporary practical affairs and external political and economic situations in the international arena. This caused inconsistency in Iran's international behavior and restricted the success of revolutionary influence on other Muslim communities.<sup>57</sup> However, a nuclear-weapons-capable Iran might feel confident about its own national security and focus its undivided attention on importing its Islamic revolution. As Duygu Sezer, a Turkish scholar highlights:

A nuclear-armed Iran would be in a position to claim leadership of the Islamic world, and to exercise increased influence on Turkish domestic politics to the detriment of Turkey's Western-type secular democratic regime and western-oriented foreign policy.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> For a detailed discussion of Kavakci affair see, Robert W. Olson, "Turkey-Iran relations, 1997 to 2000: the Kurdish and Islamist questions," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (2000): 871-90.

<sup>56</sup> Oktav, "Changing Perceptions in Turkish-Iranian Relations," 4-8, and Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations*, 55-68.

<sup>57</sup> Hunter, "Iran and the Spread of Revolutionary Islam," 731-2-48.

<sup>58</sup> Duygu B. Sezer, "Turkey's New Security Environment: Nuclear Weapons and Proliferation," *Comparative Strategy* 14, no. 2 (1995): 165.

Reliance on nuclear weapons might propel Iranian leaders to pursue the “neither East nor West, only Islam” slogan more easily and this would have a booster effect on radical Islamists in Turkey, which would have deteriorating side effects on Turkey’s secular order and domestic security.

#### **D. IRAN’S SUPPORT FOR PKK TERRORISM**

In addition to Islamic fundamentalism, Turkey faced PKK terrorism, allegedly supported by Iran, from the early 1990s through the late 2000s. Turkey accused Iran of supporting PKK by supplying weapons, training, and funds in the 1990s. Later, Turkey mostly accused Iran of turning a blind eye on PKK settlements in its borders and permitting PKK to stage attacks on Turkish troops.<sup>59</sup> Contrary to Turkey’s claims, Iran denied the accusations and stated that PKK was an extension of Turkey’s internal ethnic nationalism problem rising from Turkey’s oppressive policies towards the Kurds.<sup>60</sup>

Iran, like Turkey, feared the emergence of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq; however, another source of fear was the exclusive Turkish influence in Northern Iraq due to hot pursuits of PKK terrorists on Iraqi soil, with permission from Baghdad. Iran once thought that Turkey was trying to reach and control the oil-fields of Mosul and Kerkuk, and was strictly against Turkish military operations’ extension to Southern regions. From Turkey’s perspective, Iran was using PKK as leverage to increase its influence in Northern Iraq. Especially after the capture of Ocalan (former leader of PKK), Iran allowed PKK to hold its Annual Congress in Urmiya in February 1999. As R. Olson highlights, according to Turkey’s claims:

Iran intelligence co-operated with the PKK in recruiting local Kurds to carry out terrorist attacks against targets within Turkey. Ocalan's admission from prison, whether compelled or not, that Iran supplied the PKK with weapons and allowed weapons to be transferred via Armenia

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<sup>59</sup> Silahcioglu, *The United States, Israel-Iran Problem and Turkey*, 42.

<sup>60</sup> Izzetullah Izzeti, *Iran and Regional Geopolitics (Iran ve Bolge Jeopolitigi)*, trans. Hakki Uygur (Istanbul: Kure Yayinlari, 2005), 54-5.

and Russia, and that Tehran pressed Jalal Talabani to allow his territory to be used by the PKK to stage raids into northern Iraq increased Turkey's ire.<sup>61</sup>

Continuous PKK attacks on Turkish soil, and Turkish military operations that extended beyond its borders in pursuit of remnant PKK guerillas, became a tense issue for Iran. In 1999, Iran claimed that Turkish fighter planes bombed and damaged some Iranian village houses.<sup>62</sup> Iran's allegations that Turkish fighter aircraft bombed Iranian territory, and five Iranian soldiers were killed, caused political friction between the two countries. Iran, in retaliation, captured two Turkish soldiers, claiming that they were operating inside the Iran border and that they "invaded Iran." In addition, Iran threatened to hold the two Turkish soldiers until Turkey paid compensation. Turkey rejected these claims and Prime Minister Ecevit responded that, "If we had intended to invade Iran, we would not have done so with two soldiers."<sup>63</sup> On top of that, Chief of the Turkish General Staff Huseyin Kivrikoglu stated that,

Turkey has not bombed territory in Iran; rather it was in Iraq; further, it is impossible for Turkish pilots to miss or mistake a target because all targets and their coordinates are programmed with accurate maps into a computer. It is impossible to make a mistake.<sup>64</sup>

Both countries sent military delegations to the bombed territory, and later Turkey admitted the inadvertent drops of a few bombs on Iranian soil. Likewise, Iran was willing to accept that the bombing was a mistake and returned the two Turkish soldiers to Turkey. The crisis ended in peace; however, it showed how the two countries came to the brink of war over the issue of PKK.

Although both Turkey and Iran are concerned about potential Iraqi territorial disintegration that would result with a Kurdish state in the North, the PKK-related crisis shows that the two countries are in fact very close to hot conflicts. If any side escalates

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Olson, "Turkey-Iran Relations, 1997 to 2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (October 2000): 877.

<sup>62</sup> Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations*, 18.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-9.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

the disputes, there is a possibility that they will be dragged into a military clash. In the face of a nuclear Iran, Ankara may feel restricted from confronting Tehran in crises like this. In any escalated scenario, Tehran might view nuclear weapons as leverage or compensation for its conventional disabilities. If Turkey coerces Tehran with limited use of force or harsh sanctions, as it did in 1995 and 1999, Iran might feel the need to use its WMD capabilities to preempt or prevent a Turkish incursion into Northern Iraq or might threaten Ankara covertly or exclusively to strike strategic targets within Turkey. A nuclear Iran would also have the capability to restrict and thus to manipulate Turkey's policies and alliance options in Northern Iraq and in the Middle East.

#### **E. STRUGGLE FOR DOMINANCE IN CENTRAL ASIA**

The sudden demise of the Soviet Union opened a window of opportunities for Turkey and Iran and they expanded their cultural and economic relations with those newly emerged states. Energy resources in the Caspian Basin and the transfer of those resources from Asia to the West formed an important issue and a possibility for a military clash between Turkey and Iran.

Turkey tried to utilize its common history, cultural values, and language with those populations. Being in an eastern periphery of Europe, and having the support of the United States against Soviet expansionism, and Iran's religious hegemony in Central Asia gave Turkey a chance to establish close ties with Azerbaijan and other Turkic states. Iran's direct access to the Persian Gulf and its religious commonalities were the main factors that drove Iran's attention to Central Asia.<sup>65</sup> But their scope of influence was challenged by the stress on their economies resulting from their support of those newly emerged states with the necessary economic aids. Trying to impose any kind of strict economic and cultural model on these countries was another counterproductive method for gaining influence, since those states barely survived Soviet pressure. And as

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<sup>65</sup> Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran Relationship," 80.

Calabrese argues, "... they have failed to persuade observers, many of whom have depicted Turkish and Iranian activity in the NIS as fiercely and directly competitive."<sup>66</sup>

Azerbaijan was one of the most important states where Turkish and Iranian interests competed for influence, mostly because of Azerbaijan's resources and strategic location. Azerbaijan is a bridge to Central Asia for Turkey, and Turkey gained Azerbaijan's trust and confidence with its president Elchibey. Elchibey was against Iran's coercive and irredentist policies and exerted Azerbaijan nationalism in the country.<sup>67</sup> This tendency made Turkey a close ally. In addition to having cultural and ethnic similarities with Azerbaijan, Turkey was also interested in Azerbaijan's natural resources and the transfer of those resources; thus Turkey became an important ally in the field of oil production and pipeline construction in Azerbaijan. However, Azerbaijan also shared a border with Iran and possessed common cultural attributes with Iran's Azeri population. As Calabrese highlights, "... geographic and ethnographic facts have accentuated the importance of Azerbaijan to Iran. Preventing, if possible, the domination of Azerbaijan by any foreign or regional power—especially a hostile one—is vitally important to Iran."<sup>68</sup> "The domination of Azerbaijan by any foreign or regional power" was a reference to Turkey's support of President Elchibey.

The Nagorno-Karabakh crisis became the first signal of Turkey-Iran rivalry in the Central Asia. The alliance between Azerbaijan and Turkey depended on the supplying of military hardware and training because of strong economic and cultural ties, and required Turkey to support Azerbaijan in the crisis.<sup>69</sup> In this regard, Iran wanted to support Armenia; however, "...the costs of a protracted conflict—including the burdens of humanitarian and refugee assistance, along with the risk of increasing friction with Turkey—chastened Iran."<sup>70</sup> But the real factor that limited the freedom of Turkey-Iran actions in the conflict was Russia. "The reassertion of Russian interests in Azerbaijan,

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<sup>66</sup> Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran Relationship," 90.

<sup>67</sup> Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations*, 93.

<sup>68</sup> Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran Relationship," 91.

<sup>69</sup> Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations*, 94-5.

<sup>70</sup> Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran Relationship," 92.



and in the Caucasus generally, has fuelled Turkish-Russian competition. By comparison, Turkish-Iranian rivalry is both less intense and less consequential.”<sup>71</sup>

The competition between Turkey and Iran brought them to the edge of a military clash over the Caspian Sea demarcation problem in August 2001. The bilateral agreements Russia had with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in 2001 inclined Iran to take a more serious stance on the issue by sending its gunboats to intercept an Azerbaijan vessel that was scanning a disputed area of the Caspian Sea and also violating Azerbaijan airspace for intimidation.<sup>72</sup>

After the warning fires of Iranian boats, Turkey launched necessary military actions to stop Iran from asserting its power over Azerbaijan in the demarcation of the Caspian Sea. In this regard, chief of the General Staff General Huseyin Kivrikoglu's official visit, which was accompanied by F-16 fighters to Azerbaijan on August 23–25, was perceived as an intimidation from Turkey to Iran. An official from the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated the following:

We do not view Turkey as a frightening power. However, this adventurous gesture will be given retaliation. The mutual relations will be seriously affected by this initiative. These planes show Turkey's support for Azerbaijan, which disagrees with Iran concerning the Caspian oil, and this situation causes tension in the region.<sup>73</sup>

The Caspian Sea crisis shows that Iran's and Turkey's policies of rivalry might lead the two countries into a military clash in Central Asia. Both Turkey and Iran pay significant attention not to violate mutual political boundaries while pursuing influential strategies in the region. In this regard, Turkey's undisputed conventional preponderance

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<sup>71</sup> Sabri Sayari, “Turkey, the Caucasus, and Central Asia,” in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner (eds) *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and its Borderlands* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994), 188., cited in Calabrese, “Turkey and Iran Relationship,” 93.

<sup>72</sup> Adam Tarock, “Iran and Russia in 'Strategic Alliance',” *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (June 1997): 214-17.

<sup>73</sup> Discomfort of Turkish F-16s (F-16 Huzursuzlugu), *Sabah*, 20 August 2001 (Sabah Newspaper Archive), <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2001/08/20/p03.html> (accessed 15 November 2007).

plays an important role in preventing escalations with Iran. During a tense crisis or in any escalation, however, both might lose their rationale and drift into a situation that would eventually include fire exchanges.

A nuclear Iran, relying on its WMD and advanced missiles capabilities, might pursue an aggressive stance in its policies toward its neighbors in Central Asia or in the Caucasus. Seeing itself a nuclear power, Iran might feel more confident and exercise more assertive policies against Turkey. It is certain that a nuclear-weapons-capable Iran would gain more political bargaining power over Turkey on energy and economic issues of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

The bitter tone of relations completely changed in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraqi war. Iran enhanced its ties with Turkey, because both Iran and Turkey are concerned about potential Iraqi territorial disintegration that would result with a Kurdish state in the North. However, this enhancement of relations came after isolation of Iran by U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. The press is no longer discussing the Iranian invisible revolutionary hand in Turkey's internal Islam-related debates. The two countries' influential policies left their places to bilateral economic agreements and close ties. Turkey is nowadays enjoying great support and cooperation over the PKK issue, and Iran seems to realize how the separatist Kurdish problem would be a detrimental factor for its own ethnic structure and domestic security.

For the Turkish secular elite, the dangers of assertive Iran policies are not forgotten. The history of relations between Iran and Turkey, which reach back to the Ottomans and Persians, as examined in this chapter, reveals and identifies the mutual power parity for sustained peaceful relations. The fear of losses was among the important factors for the Ottoman Empire in preferring its expansionism towards the West rather than Persia. Likewise, Iran chose to enhance its good relations with Turkey, only after it found itself in the corner in the Cold War. The first enhancement period came immediately after the Iran-Iraqi war. The neutrality of Turkey was important for Iran

because, “Turkey was among the small number of countries (together with Pakistan) whose roads and ports Iran could use for the delivery of strategic goods and arms.”<sup>74</sup> Most Turkish strategists believe recent relations are a reflection of Iran’s attempt to break its isolation that rises from the United States military deployment, Israel’s nuclear stance, and the European Union’s pressure against Iran’s nuclear quest. In this regard, a friendly Iran might be an illusion for Turkey when Iran possesses nuclear weapons.

Although not targeted at Turkey, Iran’s medium-range missile capability is already a dangerous threat to Turkish defense. In this regard, Turkey does not share Israel’s threat perception of Iran. However, if Iran combined its missile payloads with nuclear warheads, the consequences would be very harsh for Turkey. Iran would most probably feel inclined to use deterrence of WMD in hardening its stance in the region and would exert more assertive policies especially in its relations with Turkey.

Turkey, feeling insecure, might start to pursue its own nuclear weapons program and this also might lead to an ignition of a new arms race in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia would begin producing a “Sunni bomb” to equalize the “Shi’a weapon.”<sup>75</sup> As commonly agreed, these types of counterbalancing of a nuclear Iran would not help to stabilize the Middle East and would endanger the possibility of peace in the region. As a result, being a close neighbor to the Middle East, Turkey must define its political approach to Iran, reconsider its balance of options if necessary, and be ready for the harsh consequences of a possible intervention against Iran, remembering the last two Gulf Wars and their deteriorating effects on Turkey’s security and economy.

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<sup>74</sup> Gundogan, “Islamist Iran and Turkey,” 7-9.

<sup>75</sup> Farmer, “Why Iran Proliferates,” 2.

### III. TURKEY'S DEFENSE OPTIONS

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Iran's ambition "to exercise its right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful means" or in other words it's allegedly "clandestine quest for nuclear weapons" highlights a complicated security issue in the Middle East. A nuclear Iran with its hatred against so-called Zionism is an unacceptable threat to Israel's existence in the region. The United States, as an ally and close supporter of Israel, shares the same perception and poses a determined stance for an immediate solution. The European Union is more cautious and prefers diplomacy first; however, diplomacy and its most coercive method of sanctions for a rollback also yield its limitations, since the European nations have considerable trade with Iran.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, Russia and China's attitudes rely heavily on Iran's role as an oil producer.<sup>77</sup>

Turkey, a close neighbor to Iran, also finds a nuclear Iran unacceptable both for its own existence and for a stable Middle East, as discussed in the previous chapter; however, Turkey has not shown its official stance against Iran's nuclear quest.<sup>78</sup> Turkey's position on dealing with a nuclear-weapons-capable Iran still maintains its ambiguity. Regarding the long peace period from 1639 and recently enhanced economic and political relationships formed by the current administration of Turkish Prime Minister Recep T. Erdogan with Iran, Turkey's deliberate and ambiguous policies projecting a neutral posture might seem appropriate, but that neutrality has nothing to do with dissuading Iran from becoming another nuclear power in the region.

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<sup>76</sup> George Perkovich, Silvia Manzanero, "Iran Gets The Bomb—Then What?" in *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran*, eds. Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson (Cambridge, MA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 178.

<sup>77</sup> Sherifa D. Zuhur, "Iran, Iraq, and the United States: The New Triangle's Impact on Sectarianism and the Nuclear Threat," *The Strategic Studies Institute*, November 2006 (monograph online), 53, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB738.pdf> (accessed 9 November 2007).

<sup>78</sup> Yigal Schleifer, "Caught in the Fray: Turkey Enters Debate on Iran's Nuclear Program," *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 February 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0202/p05s01-woeu.html> (accessed 13 April 2007).

The first section of this chapter will identify the external alliance options that Turkey should adopt on diverting Iran from its nuclear quest. The next section will be devoted to analyzing the internal counterbalancing options to deter Iran from utilizing its WMD capability to exert assertive policies against Turkey — if Iran reaches a nuclear-weapons-capable status. Reflections and shortcomings of these options for future Turkish foreign policy for durable stability in the region will be evaluated.

## **B. EXTERNAL ALLIANCES**

Turkey has been exposed to proliferation developments on its borders and nuclear weapons deployed on its territory, both because of having borders with potential nuclear states such as Syria and Iraq and because of having lived under the protective umbrella of NATO, mainly supported by the United States in the Cold War era. Close ties with the United States, reliance on American defense systems, and Israel's active participation in Turkey's defense modernization and high degree of collaboration on training and intelligence sharing on nuclear and missile threats are seen as signs of developments that might eventually lead to Turkey's facilitating American and Israeli intervention in Iran. This facilitation could include provision of air bases and over-flight rights for air strikes against Iran's nuclear structures. On the other hand, Turkey officially declared that it will not support a military operation that will result in hot conflicts adjacent to its borders.<sup>79</sup> For this reason, Turkey's external balancing options are formed not only around the United States and Israel but also the NATO and EU alliances. Implications of the U.S. strategy, Israel's choices, and the European Union's diplomacy and economic sanctions approach along with NATO's security commitments on the issue will have important effects on shaping Turkey's stance against Iran's nuclear program.

### **1. The United States**

Iran's clandestine nuclear program faced strong opposition from the United States when it was discovered that Iran had made good progress on the road to nuclear weapons with the uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and the heavy water production facility in

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<sup>79</sup> Yigal Schleifer, "Caught in the Fray."

Arak in August 2002 despite the U.S. dual containment policies.<sup>80</sup> According to the United States, Iran's cowardly attempt to build uranium enrichment facilities in Natanz was for the exclusive intention of developing nuclear weapons.<sup>81</sup> The United States strongly argued that Iran's secret intentions on uranium enrichment are a violation of Article II of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and for this reason Iran also should not be entitled to implement its rights under Article IV in order to develop nuclear technology.<sup>82</sup>

The United States is seen as being on the most determined side to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons and repeatedly highlights the need for a decisive action on the issue. As Vice President Dick Cheney stated,

The Iranian regime needs to know that if it stays on its present course, the international community is prepared to impose meaningful consequences. For our part, the United States is keeping all options on the table in addressing the irresponsible conduct of the regime.... We will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon.<sup>83</sup>

Although the United States together with Israel have been the supporters of immediate and decisive action to prevent Iran becoming nuclear state, according to a Turkish Scholar, Mustafa Kibaroglu:

The United States faces essentially three options to stop Iran from going further down the road to become a *de facto* nuclear weapons state. The first possibility is to stage "regime change" and bring in an administration that might renounce nuclear weapons. The second is to carry out a "military strike" (limited in scope and purpose) against carefully selected nuclear installations to set the nuclear program back several years. The

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<sup>80</sup> Dogu Silahcioglu, *The United States, Israel-Iran Problem and Turkey (A.B.D., Israil-Iran Denklemleri ve Turkiye)* (Istanbul: Gunizi Press, 2006), 70.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>82</sup> Article I requires the five nuclear weapon states (the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China) "not to transfer possession or control of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices to any recipient and not to assist, encourage, or induce any non-nuclear weapon state to acquire nuclear weapons." For a detailed discussion and implications for Article I and II see John Wolf's (Assistant Secretary for Nonproliferation) 2005 conference review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (April 2004), <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/rls/rm/32290.htm> (accessed 23 November 2007).

<sup>83</sup> Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Cheney, Like President, Has a Warning for Iran," *The New York Times*, 22 October 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/22/washington/22cheney.html> (accessed 20 November 2007).

third is to “engage” Iran diplomatically and apply a “carrot and stick” policy to convince the mullahs that it is not in their best interest to pursue a complete nuclear fuel cycle...<sup>84</sup>

It is a certain fact that young generations in Iran are displeased with the current regime and do not want Iran to be mentioned in connection with phrases like “sponsorship of terror” and “pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.” In this regard, as Michael Rubin from Pentagon states, “We are calling for regime change, but we trust the Iranian people to do it for themselves. The Islamic Republic is incapable of reforming itself, and the United States will stand with the people.”<sup>85</sup> But counting on a democratic movement supplied by a “popular uprising” or in other words “civil war” has a low probability because as Kaveh Ehsani argues, “hardliners in the Iranian regime have managed effectively to block most significant attempts at reforming governance over the past four years.”<sup>86</sup> Tehran managed to suppress Iranian students’ demonstrations to protest the current regime in 1999, and such movements are unlikely to be repeated in the near future. Another indication that a civil uprising would fail is that, according to M. Kibaroglu:

When it comes to the nuclear weapons issue, those in the opposition are similar to the regime supporters. They also want the bomb, but not in the hands of the mullahs. Therefore, the theory of “regime change” even with a slim chance of success in the foreseeable future, apparently will not work in Iran as far as denouncing nuclear weapons capability is concerned.<sup>87</sup>

There is also a considerable group in Iran that does not believe in the external preaching on democracy and see this effort as another imperialist policy from the United

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<sup>84</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs: The West and Iran’s Quest for Nuclear Power,” *The Middle East Journal* 60, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 226-7.

<sup>85</sup> Kaveh Ehsani, “High Stakes for Iran,” *Middle East Report*, no. 227 (Summer, 2003): 40, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0899-2851%28200322%290%3A227%3C38%3AHSFI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-X> (accessed 24 November 2007).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>87</sup> Kibaroglu, “The West and Iran’s Quest,” 227.

States.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, Iranian people are determined to bring democracy by themselves and this will most probably require more years for a desired solution on Iran's nuclear quest.

Although a limited but comprehensive military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities is argued to be feasible for the United States, the actual possibility of success of this surgical type of operation is very low indeed. The reason is that, in contrast to Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor that was destroyed by Israeli fighters, Iran's nuclear program does not include a single key target for halting the nuclear program.<sup>89</sup> The diversity and large number of production facilities are due to the nature of the process of uranium enrichment, and it is very difficult to trace the number of additional facilities, believed to be nineteen.<sup>90</sup> Pinpointing all nuclear facilities as key targets, spread over a vast territory, requires highly precise intelligence from the United States and Israel. The current level of ambiguous intelligence on these facilities is far from being precise.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, even successful military attacks would not have the desired results of suspending Iran's nuclear program substantially.

Iran's nuclear facilities are mostly underground and defended both actively and passively. These numerous potential targets require a massive effort to contain the violence projected in an escalated conflict with Iran. As S. Ritter highlights, "According to U.S. military planners, an attack on Iran, even if it was limited in scope to Iran's nuclear activities, would rapidly spin out of control into a regional conflict that could not be contained."<sup>92</sup> For this reason, the U.S. military is also ambivalent about the viability of a contained surgical air strike on Iran. In such an operation with or without the support of its allies, "The United States would rapidly find itself embroiled in another land war which it lacked the resources to sustain. Any military strike against Iran, the military

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<sup>88</sup> Silahcioglu, *The United States, Israel-Iran Problem and Turkey*, 83.

<sup>89</sup> Scott Ritter, *Target Iran: the Truth about the White House's Plans for Regime Change* (New York: Nation Books, 2006), 146.

<sup>90</sup> Shlomo Brom, "Is the Begin Doctrine Still A Viable Option For Israel?" in *Getting Ready For A Nuclear-Ready Iran*, eds. Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson, (Cambridge, MA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 147.

<sup>91</sup> Kibaroglu, "The West and Iran's Quest," 227.

<sup>92</sup> Ritter, *Target Iran*, 146.



believed, would quickly become a fight to the finish, with the ultimate outcome in doubt.”<sup>93</sup> It is believed that the Bush administration, after its prolonged failure in liberating Iraq, will not to pursue another land war in dealing with Iran, which would definitely require more resources.<sup>94</sup>

The absence of multilateral commitment on economic sanctions to roll back Iran’s nuclear program also shows itself in the U.S. engagement in Iran with “carrot and stick.”<sup>95</sup> Moreover, Americans and Iranians have another problem of perception on certain definitions of economic incentive and sanction. As Kibaroglu argues:

It seems that Americans and Iranians attribute different meanings to the same word. For Iranians, engagement means economic benefits while nuclear activities—including uranium enrichment—continue under stringent inspections. For Americans, engagement means eventual normalization of economic and even political relations provided Iran quits enrichment indefinitely, changes its attitude toward Israel, and gives up its support of Hezbollah.<sup>96</sup>

While Iran sees its uranium enrichment program as within its sovereignty rights and opposes a halt to its enrichment process and further tries to gain more efficient centrifuges in addition to its 3,000 working centrifuges, the United Nations’ resolution imposing new sanctions does not seem successful in gaining Iran’s compliance.<sup>97</sup> Iran, with its 25-year closed economy under the sanctions of U.S. “dual containment” policies, is interested in neither incentives nor sanctions.<sup>98</sup>

Being a NATO member from 1952 in the eastern periphery of destabilization and Cold War threats, and a close ally to the United States, Turkey might be seen as a

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<sup>93</sup> Ritter, *Target Iran*, 147.

<sup>94</sup> Silahcioglu, *The United States, Israel-Iran Problem and Turkey*, 131.

<sup>95</sup> Colum Lynch, “Europeans Work on New Anti-Nuclear Deal for Iran,” *The Washington Post*, 10 May 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/09/AR2006050901495.html> (accessed 23 November 2007).

<sup>96</sup> Kibaroglu, “The West and Iran’s Quest,” 228.

<sup>97</sup> Robin Wright, “U.S. to Seek New Sanctions against Iran: U.N. Report Faults Tehran's Input on Nuclear Program,” *The Washington Post*, 16 November 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/15/AR2007111502309.html> (accessed 23 November 2007).

<sup>98</sup> Kibaroglu, “The West and Iran’s Quest,” 228.

potential supporter of a coercive military strike on Iran; however, recent U.S.-Turkey relations were seriously damaged by the Iraq war, and Turkey's unhappiness increased with U.S. policies toward the Kurdish groups in northern Iraq. Perception of the allegedly U.S. help to Kurds to build an independent state, regardless of what the American diplomats are asserting publicly, has been the main source of "Anti-Americanism" in Turkey. Some Turkish analysts even argue that "a confrontation with the U.S. over northern Iraq is not a far-fetched scenario."<sup>99</sup>

The most significant policy divergence with the United States occurred when the Turkish Grand National Assembly did not authorize Turkish territory to be used for deployment of American troops for a support attack on Iraq from the North, despite heavy pressure from the Bush administration.<sup>100</sup> Although that decision was surprising even for Gul administration (Justice and Development Government), Washington harshly criticized the vote and blamed the Turkish Armed Forces for not putting enough pressure on the administration for the resolution.<sup>101</sup> This criticism of course prompted Turkish politicians to respond in an equally harsh manner stating that, "The United States most probably sees Turkey as a tribe rather than a democracy."<sup>102</sup>

Although the bitterness of the relationship was mitigated after the Turkish resolution crisis, "the absence of a close ongoing dialogue on current issues at the highest level — previously a hallmark of U.S.-Turkish relations — testifies to the continuing lack of warmth in the relationship."<sup>103</sup> That bitter tone, however, is not the main factor why Turkey would not support a U.S. military action on Iran, although there has not been a request from the United States yet. The probable opposition to a war on Iran would be due to the further stability concern of Ankara in the Middle East and the core goal of

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<sup>99</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Beyond Iran: The Risk of a Nuclearizing Middle East" (paper presented at the The Washington Institute Policy Forum Luncheon, Washington D.C., 9 February 2005).

<sup>100</sup> Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations*, 176.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>103</sup> Seda Ciftci, *The US-Turkish Alliance at the Iranian Junction?* Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 15 July 2006, 2, <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/tu060413.pdf> (accessed 23 November 2007).

Turkey's foreign policy to act as a mediating power between the East and the West. A war on Iran would have different implications for Turkey than the Iraq war. Potential retaliation of Tehran is a higher threat than that of Baghdad. Iran, in contrast to Saddam's Iraq, would not feel restrained to retaliate against Turkey if Turkey actively joined a strike on Iran or supported the U.S. forces logistically. Iraq's integrity, along with the prevention of the emergence of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, is and will remain a top priority for Turkish secular elites. A possible regime change with a so-called democratization process in Iran after a military intervention, though unlikely, is not desirable for Turkey. While the deteriorated situation and stability of Northern Iraq maintains its importance, the emergence of additional clashes, especially those adjacent to Turkey's eastern borders, would not be acceptable for Turkey.

## **2. Israel**

The statements of President Ahmadinejad about Israel and Zionism have increased Israel's concerns over Iran's nuclear program.<sup>104</sup> Israel repeatedly stated that Iran's nuclear program is a clear threat for Israel and Israel is decisive on preventing Iran from becoming a *de facto* nuclear state. Officials repeatedly highlighted that Israel would not be deterred from the difficulty of a military operation or international reaction.<sup>105</sup>

The successful Israeli attack on an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981 and its small but high technology military power might propel Israeli officials to adopt a more assertive stance on the military strike option when necessary, but Iran also seems to have learned a lot from the Osirak attack. Iran's nuclear project is well defended and dispersed. On top of that, Iran is believed to be pursuing a dual track—the uranium and the plutonium track—on its uranium enrichment process for redundancy.<sup>106</sup> The real number of key nuclear facilities is claimed to be unknown by Israeli and U.S. intelligence.<sup>107</sup> Besides,

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<sup>104</sup> Nazila Fathi, "Iran's President Says Israel Must Be 'Wiped off the Map'," *The New York Times*, 26 October 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/26/international/middleeast/26cnd-iran.html> (accessed 24 November 2007).

<sup>105</sup> Silahcioglu, *The United States, Israel-Iran Problem and Turkey*, 114.

<sup>106</sup> Brom, "Is the Begin Doctrine Still a Viable Option?" 147.

<sup>107</sup> Ritter, *Target Iran*, 146.

Iran in anticipation of an Israeli preventive strike is believed to have built most of its nuclear facilities far from its western borders. It can be argued that the Bushier nuclear power plant, being so close to the Persian Gulf, is vulnerable to Israeli air attacks; however, the Bushier power plant according to S. Brom, "... is not really a part of Iran's military nuclear program, and it mostly serves as an excuse for an Iranian wish to have control over the full fuel cycle, namely building a capacity for uranium enrichment."<sup>108</sup> A strike on the Bushier power plant would not inflict any considerable damage on Iran's program.

Israel, in contrast to the United States, does not have sufficient military capabilities to conduct a comprehensive air strike on Iran's nuclear facilities on its own. This kind of strike would require a 3,000 to 3,500 kilometer two-way flight range from Israeli air bases. This range would need to be extended if passage through Jordanian or Iraqi air space was not granted. Turkey and India are among the other options of Israeli alliance, but current good relations of these countries with Iran and fear of destabilization in the region would be another difficulty for facilitating an Israeli air strike. Despite the fact that Iranian air defense systems are relatively obsolete in comparison with Israel's improved countermeasure capabilities, Iran's dispersed and heavily deployed air defense systems, especially around the nuclear facilities, would further complicate such an operation for military planners.<sup>109</sup> The conclusion is that current Israeli military capabilities are far from able to sustain such a complicated air strike that would destroy all of the necessary targets for halting the Iranian nuclear program for good. Iran's response to a military strike as S. Brom states, "... would be either to withdraw from the NPT, or to rally Islamic Jihadists to wage a war against the United States and its allies more directly."<sup>110</sup>

There seems to be another option of "initiating a Middle East nuclear restraint effort that would help isolate Iran as a regional producer of fissile materials" for Israel other than striking Iran. As Henry Sokolski argues:

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<sup>108</sup> Brom, "Is the Begin Doctrine Still a Viable Option?" 147.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Israel should announce that it will unilaterally mothball (but not yet dismantle) Dimona, and place the reactor's mothballing under IAEA monitoring. At the same time, Israel should announce that it is prepared to dismantle Dimona and place the special nuclear 17 material it has produced in "escrow" in Israel with a third trusted declared nuclear state, e.g., the United States. It should make clear, however, that Israel will only take this additional step when at least two of three Middle Eastern nations (i.e., Algeria, Egypt, or Iran) follow Israel's lead by mothballing their own declared nuclear facilities that are capable of producing at least one bomb's worth of plutonium or highly enriched uranium in 1 to 3 years.<sup>111</sup>

This initiation is believed to have motivated Algeria, Egypt, and Iran to dismantle their fissile producing facilities and formally agree not to redeploy nuclear weapons in the Middle East. However, this would not be a viable option for Israel if those countries did not accept the initiation. The United States must act as a motivator to European countries in supporting Algeria, Egypt, and especially Iran to build non-nuclear energy facilities with their infrastructure and know-how abilities. But this option relies heavily on the willingness of Iran and the attractiveness of non-nuclear energy sources that European countries will supply. Ambiguous Israeli nuclear strategy, which Israeli officials see as the very reason for their existence in a hostile environment, and Iranian national pride on its nuclear energy program are important factors that reduce the applicability of such a proposal in the near future.

Close cooperation between Turkey and Israel began with the Turkish diplomatic decision at the end of 1991, "when Turkey decided to upgrade its diplomatic relations with Israel to ambassadorial level."<sup>112</sup> This initiation by Turkey started mutual high-level visits and expanded bilateral trade to significant amounts with high-level military cooperation. In 1996, Turkey and Israel reached a military agreement and cooperation in intelligence gathering and electric surveillance on Turkey's southeastern and eastern borders. The agreement also allowed Israeli jets to fly and participate in air exercises with the Turkish Air Force in Turkey. Turkish Phantoms' modernization by the Israeli defense

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<sup>111</sup> Henry Sokolski, "Getting Ready For A Nuclear-Ready Iran: Report of the NPEC Working Group," in *Getting Ready For A Nuclear-Ready Iran*, eds. Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson, (Cambridge, MA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 147.

<sup>112</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 48.

industry and the purchase of Popeye-1 air to ground stand-off missiles were also within the agreement. But it is argued that in fact the military agreement between Israel and Turkey is not an alliance as Efrahim Inbar argues:

The entente between the two capitals is clearly not a military alliance in the traditional sense; the two countries have not defined a *casus foederis*.... There is no commitment to mutual defense or formal military coordination for future contingencies. They both fear entrapment in crises of limited relevance to their own national security and neither expects the other to participate actively in its wars.<sup>113</sup>

Although it is claimed that “Turkish and Israeli military and civilian officials appear to have discussed ‘joint threats’ as part of their strategic cooperation,”<sup>114</sup> there is no official explanation as to what extent Iran and its nuclear ambitions were discussed. Potential deficiency in intelligence on Iran nuclear targets and the difficulty of conducting a comprehensive strike, along with the retaliation threat from Iran exclusively by its missiles and inclusively by its support of terrorism would pose a great challenge for Turkey in supporting its recent military partner.

Israel might be encouraged with its successful Osiraq attack, because “the political price it had to pay eventually was insignificant; U.S. sanctions were limited and stopped after a short time and the negative effect on its relations with other states also subsided very quickly.”<sup>115</sup> Israel has the freedom to be a strong advocate of preventive strikes on Iran, because it perceives that, despite some Arab states’ possible strong objection and condemnation of Israeli aggressiveness, the same states would also feel relieved since a nuclear Iran is also a threat to them.<sup>116</sup> In contrast to Israeli freedom, Turkey does not have the same liberty to participate actively in or support an exclusive Israeli or a U.S.-Israel coalition’s military strike on Iran. With its fragile economy and dependence on its neighbors, namely Iran, the Erdogan administration, who tries to build

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<sup>113</sup> Inbar, “Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership,” 48.

<sup>114</sup> Wyn Q. Bowen and Joanna Kidd, “The Nuclear Capabilities and Ambitions of Iran’s Neighbors,” in *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran*, ed. Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson (Cambridge, MA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 67.

<sup>115</sup> Brom, “Is the Begin Doctrine Still a Viable Option?” 153.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

and strengthen a bridge between East and West in its quest for E.U. membership would find it difficult to support such action. Thus this perception will make Turkey a solid defender to multilateral solutions and propel it to comply with a European approach other than bilateral coalitions.

### **3. European Union**

The European Union is deliberate and prefers diplomacy first on dealing with the nuclear-Iran problem. Although Europe's reluctance to get involved as a hardliner in the United States-Iran nuclear standoff is criticized by the Bush administration, the three Foreign Ministers of the European Union, namely the United Kingdom, France, and Germany made their first official visits to Tehran in order to persuade Iranians to sign the Additional Protocol set by International Atomic Energy Agency in 2003.<sup>117</sup> Since then, the three countries maintained their negotiations with Iran about the confrontation with the United States on stopping its uranium enrichment program. The EU diplomacy approach proved to be successful to a certain degree, since Iran voluntarily agreed to halt all its enrichment-related and reprocessing activities temporarily on 15 November 2004 as a result of these negotiations.<sup>118</sup> But when Iran reportedly failed on its suspension, the United States criticized EU initiatives to give more time to Iran on its road to nuclear weapons.<sup>119</sup> The European Union's diplomacy approach is based on giving incentives to Tehran as alternatives to its civilian atomic energy program; however, as Sokolski argues:

As for negotiating directly with Tehran to limit its declared nuclear program an — approach preferred by most of America's European allies this — too seems self-defeating. First, any deal the Iranian regime would agree to would only validate that the NPT legally allows its members to acquire all the capabilities Iran mastered. Second, it would foster the view

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<sup>117</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 2 (March 2007): 238.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, Iran's Nuclear Program: Recent Developments (RS21592, 7 October 2003) by Sharon Squassoni, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RS21592.pdf> (accessed 28 November 2007).

internationally that the only risk in violating required NPT inspections would be to be caught and then bribed to limit only those activities the inspectors managed to discover.<sup>120</sup>

On top of that, Tehran repeatedly highlighted that it was not interested in a European Union offer of incentives in return for a halt to its nuclear program, as Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi stated:

If Europe is seeking diplomatic and peaceful solutions, it must not go beyond international treaties.... No incentives are better than implementing the NPT and the IAEA rules without discrimination.... Iran had informed the European side at the beginning of the negotiations that the aim is to make fuel for peaceful purposes, and Iran is not seeking anything beyond its rights and would not accept commitments beyond that.... It looks like after three years of negotiations and Iran's clear position Mr. Solana [EU foreign policy chief] still has doubts about Iran's rights. This is really surprising.<sup>121</sup>

Tehran's denial of European incentives and its failure to suspend its enrichment program forced the European Union to accept resolution 1696 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The resolution demanded that "Iran shall suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, to be verified by the IAEA," and threatened further action, including possible economic and diplomatic sanctions in case of noncompliance.<sup>122</sup> Economic sanctions aim to compel Iranian leaders to change their minds and abandon nuclear weapon capabilities by inflicting enough pain on Iran's economy once it secured nuclear weapons rather than only trying to prevent its nuclear weapon quest. In this manner, a nuclear Iran might be isolated politically by a loss of international respect. The desire to be integrated into the international community with Iranian's significant pride of Persian identity has considerable effects on well-educated young Iran reformers. Iran's hardliners, however, such as the Revolutionary Guard and

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<sup>120</sup> Sokolski, "Getting Ready For A Nuclear-Ready Iran," 3.

<sup>121</sup> "Iran Says not Interested in EU Incentives," *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, 17 May 2006, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=32015> (accessed 23 November 2007).

<sup>122</sup> John R. Cook, "Continuing Efforts to Curtail Iranian Nuclear Program," *The American Journal of International Law* 100, no. 4 (October 2006):954-5.



the Guardian Council, do not seem afraid of Iran's isolation.<sup>123</sup> Thus this perception reduces the chances of the isolation approach as an effective tool in near future.

Iran is highly dependent on its export revenues and foreign investments for sustained economic growth. The high unemployment rate is another important factor that affects its economic growth. Multilateral economic sanctions to cut off investment and exports could deprive Iran of highly needed capital and thus growth. Sanctions on natural gas exports would impose heavy pressure, but reducing foreign investment would have "dramatic effects on Iran's economy," because Iran lacks the capacity and infrastructure to utilize its natural gas resources.<sup>124</sup> Iran is in great need of machinery, transportation vehicles, chemical products, iron, and steel for increasing its gas exports.<sup>125</sup>

For these reasons, the European Union can be argued to have a great influence on Iran's behavior with respect to its nuclear program; however, the main challenge to sanctions for a rollback is to provide and maintain the international community's cooperation and support for sanctions against Iran. France, Germany, Italy, and the U.K. will probably face a difficult choice about whether to adopt economic sanctions on Iran, because their current economic relations with Iran are so important for their own prosperities. Another difficulty lies with South Korea, China, and Japan, since "China receives one-sixth of its oil from Iran, Japan imports one-tenth, and 5 percent of South Korea's total oil needs come from Iran."<sup>126</sup> It will be very difficult to obtain subtle support from China and Japan on economic sanctions because of their distance from an Iranian nuclear threat along with their reliance on oil coming from Iran.

Current enhanced economic relations and security cooperation against PKK will force Turkey to retain a strong preference for multilateral approaches on dealing with a nuclear Iran. The current administration in Ankara predominantly views Iran as not an imminent threat, in contrast to Turkey's secular elite. In this context, Turkey's bid to become a member of the European Union will play a crucial and determining role in

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<sup>123</sup> Perkovich and Manzanero, "Iran Gets the Bomb—Then What?" 180.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 184-5.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 202.

shaping Turkey's official stance against nuclear-Iran. As mentioned, the EU strongly prefers soft diplomacy as a first option in resolving the issue and this is also beneficial for the Erdogan administration, which focused on domestic reforms and economic growth rather than external security debates in forming Turkish policies. But, EU capabilities to project efficient military power in the Middle East are very restricted in contrast to the United States, and this is one of the main reasons for the EU to adapt diplomacy first. Actually, as R. Russell highlights:

The Europeans are all too willing to let political and military problems in the Middle East fester, to step aside and let the Americans carry the lion's share of the region's political-military burdens, and to eagerly criticize American policy for failing to deliver a "perpetual peace" to the troubled region.<sup>127</sup>

The Erdogan administration would imitate the Europeans deliberate approach of "waiting, watching and condemning the United States unilateralism" when necessary if a nuclear-Iran chose not to alter its current good relations with Turkey, which in reality depends on balance of power. However, the European Union's inefficiency in projecting military power to the Middle East might propel Turkey to align itself with the American and Israeli hardliner approach, only if Tehran exclusively threatened Turkey with its future nuclear weapons. Besides, the EU might reconsider Turkey's membership with the implication of a nuclear Iran. A nuclear-weapon-capable Iran, as Russell argues, "... might reinforce existing European wariness regarding the security 'baggage' Turkey brings to the table.... Will the EU want to acquire a formal border with Iraq, Syria, and a nuclear armed Iran?"<sup>128</sup> Such reconsideration will force Turkey to look for more practical options and thus will coerce it to take demanding stance before its NATO alliance or consider its internal counterbalancing options against a nuclear-Iran.

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<sup>127</sup> Richard L. Russell, "Arab Security Responses to A Nuclear-Ready Iran," in *Getting Ready For A Nuclear-Ready Iran*, ed. Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson (Cambridge, MA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 46.

<sup>128</sup> Russell, "Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran," 46.

#### 4. NATO

NATO would play an important role as a coercive force only if all member states acknowledged a future U.N. Security Council's military intervention on Iran. Such a decision, despite its low probability of support by the international community, would bring NATO into the Persian Gulf as an important actor. Drawing NATO exclusively into the Middle East is seen as more preferable by the Arab Gulf States because they see a greater European security involvement via the NATO alliance as a "checks and balance" system to the unilateral U.S. actions against Iran. On the other hand, the United States would feel relieved by bringing some legitimacy to its actions against Iran.<sup>129</sup>

Turkey's security perception about the missile proliferation in the Middle East was relatively relaxed in comparison to its Western allies in NATO and Israel. Having its economic centers and dense population far from the Middle East was the main reason for this perception; however, with an increase in those missiles' range, that perception left itself to new security concerns.<sup>130</sup> NATO's "first-use" strategy on nuclear weapons, "at least in its official statements," which means that NATO may be the first to use nuclear weapons in an aggression when necessary rather than preemptively, was embraced by Turkey, and sufficient enough in deterring and denying the use of nuclear weapons in the Cold War era.<sup>131</sup>

The 1990–1991 Gulf War changed the Turkish strategic perceptions very deeply regarding WMD and missile risks. Turkey in contrast to Israel did not become a target of Iraqi Scud missiles; however, there was still a considerable threat for Turkey since Turgut Ozal's administration exclusively supported the Gulf War coalition and facilitated Incirlik Air Base for allied air operations. But the NATO alliance was slow and reluctant

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<sup>129</sup> Russell, "Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear Ready-Iran," 46.

<sup>130</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Turkey, Iran and Nuclear Risks," in *Getting Ready For A Nuclear-Ready Iran*, ed. Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson (Cambridge, MA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 93.

<sup>131</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Isn't it Time to Say Farewell to Nukes in Turkey?" *European Security* 14, no. 4 (December 2005): 448.

to increase missile defense reinforcement in Turkey, and military officials anxiously realized that crowded but classic Turkish forces were far from responding to the missile and WMD threats.<sup>132</sup>

The 9/11 terrorist attacks, however, caused radical changes to threat perceptions and made classical deterrent theories questionable against newly emerged non-state actors and increased probability of unauthorized use of nuclear weapons by terrorists groups. For Turkey it has become clear that NATO failed to or preferred not to respond in its solidarity to newly emerged crises by focusing on the legitimacy of a Global War on Terrorism rather than discussing the invoking of Article V.<sup>133</sup> Article V states that all NATO members promise to assist against any kind of aggression against a NATO member and its territorial integrity. In this manner, European allies gave their immediate support to the United States after terrorist attacks to wage a war against Afghanistan. However, when the Bush administration marched for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, Europe showed reluctance and debated the legitimacy of such an intervention. Consequents were felt especially when Turkey wanted the alliance to enact Article IV in preparation for a possible Article V invoking. But Turkey's demand was harshly opposed by France and Germany.<sup>134</sup>

European allies openly showed their opposition to taking such responsibilities to support one of its member's vital security interests. This Turkish officials start to think twice about NATO's actual commitment to Turkey's defense, especially in face of WMD proliferation by multiple countries, namely Iran and Iraq in the Middle East.<sup>135</sup> Some analysts even argued that this thrust issue was another reason why the Turkish Grand National Assembly did not give an authorization to U.S. troops for a support attack from Turkish soils to Iraq in March 2003.<sup>136</sup> This wariness about NATO's reliability would propel Turkey to think about its internal counterbalancing options, especially if Europe

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<sup>132</sup> Lesser, "Turkey, Iran and Nuclear Risks," 93.

<sup>133</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "NATO: Before and After the Second Gulf War," *Quarterly Journal* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 45.

<sup>134</sup> Kibaroglu, "NATO: Before and After," 45.

<sup>135</sup> Silahcioglu, *The United States, Israel-Iran Problem and Turkey*, 107-8.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

maintained its demanding and unyielding attitude in accepting Turkey's participation in EU and did not commit itself to defending its would-be member Turkey's vital security concerns in the near future in the Middle East.

### **C. INTERNAL COUNTERBALANCING**

The European Union's membership process and economic relations with Iran will have a great impact on whether Ankara chooses multilateral solutions rather than bilateral coalitions approaching Iran's nuclear quest. The recent progress Ankara made over participating in the EU will inevitably coerce Turkey to act in accordance with the EU political approach by imposing economic sanctions against Iran and forcing it to rely on NATO alliances other than the U.S. and Israel coalitions for its security. But as the first section revealed, there has been a rising liability concern among Turkish security elite in trusting NATO alliances' commitment to Turkey in practical terms. Referring to the Turkish security elite does not necessarily imply the Turkish Armed Forces, since especially after the Cold War the Turkish public began to voice their opinions about foreign policies and security debates of Turkey. In this regard, NATO's short-term possible failures to respond Turkey's anxiety about a nuclear Iran, along with the European Union's additional ignorance of Turkey's security perceptions and its lack of capabilities to timely project military power in crises, will inevitably guide Turkey to consider practical measures, namely going nuclear after Iran or hardening its defensive capabilities denying and deterring WMD use against itself. Both options would have implications since, being a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Turkey would face serious pressure from the international arena, and a buildup of its defensive capabilities and hardening of its missile defense systems would attract attention from its neighbors.

#### **1. A Nuclear Turkey**

Turkey, being a state party to the NPT and a voluntarily ratifier of additional IAEA protocols, has never sought the ways to become a nuclear-weapon-capable state and is unlikely to become one in the future; however, as Turkish scholar Mustafa Kibaroglu argues:

The loyalty of an increasing number of Turks, especially from the younger generations, be they in politics, in academia, in the military or in state bureaucracy, to the norms of the nonproliferation regimes cannot be taken for granted indefinitely, if the United States and the European Union fail to convince Iran to forego the nuclear weapons option. Otherwise, Iran's nuclear ambitions may trigger young Turks to *think nuclear* more seriously.<sup>137</sup>

It is important to examine Turkey's nuclear activities in order to determine future capabilities and assess whether Turkey might become another nuclear proliferator in the case that "young Turks" start to consider nuclear options in the face of security challenges.

It's important to highlight that currently there are no nuclear power reactors in Turkey other than two small research reactors, but in the shadow of energy shortfalls, building a nuclear power station has become a highly debated issue. Turkey's nuclear power research started with the establishment of the Cekmece Nuclear Research and Training Center (CNRTC) with a one megawatt thermal pool type research reactor in 1962. Later in 1966 the Nuclear Research and Training Center (ANRTC) was established for planning and utilizing Turkey's natural uranium reserves. Feasibility studies were conducted for the construction of a 300- to 400-megawatt reactor; however, economic and political crises halted the project. Later similar research was conducted in 1972 to install a 600-megawatt reactor, but again the project was interrupted by military intervention in 1980.<sup>138</sup>

After 1981, Ankara sought to install a nuclear reactor in Sinop and Akkuyu by beginning talks with seven foreign nuclear energy supplier firms including Atomic Energy of Canada, Kraftwerk Union of Germany, and General Electric of the United States. Negotiations with General Electric ended prematurely since, according to the firm, a reactor in Sinop would not be feasible due to seismic threats in Black Sea. The German firm Kraftwerk Union withdrew from the negotiations, later claiming this was because of financing conditions. Atomic Energy of Canada accepted the agreement; however,

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<sup>137</sup> Kibaroglu, "The Risk of a Nuclearizing Middle East."

financing became a problem in the building of three major reactors for the firm and the firm's fund request was rejected by Canadian government. The Canadian administration's request from Turkey to finance the reactors was inconsistent with initial agreements of "build-operate-transfer;" therefore, again, the quest for nuclear power was halted.<sup>139</sup>

Another important factor was claimed to be political, since Pakistani and Turkish relations showed considerable improvement with new Turkish President Kenan Evren (former Chief of the Turkish General Staff) and General President Zia ul-Haq, and this close relationship was perceived as a new quest for Pakistan to acquire a new transfer way for its nuclear bomb. The Pakistan enrichment program had been blocked by NATO in early 1980, and the Greek Prime Minister claimed that, "Pakistan expected Turkey to act as a trans-shipper of material for a nuclear bomb and would reciprocate by proudly sharing the nuclear bomb technology with Turkey."<sup>140</sup> Such a claim was sufficient enough to raise concerns from the United States and the West to approach Turkey's nuclear power programs deliberately, and those concerns showed their effects explicitly when Turkey reached an agreement with Argentina for technical assistance including nuclear fuel cycle research on power and reactor planning, construction, and operation. The initial phase was to build a 25-megawatt research reactor for these purposes; however, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Germany put great pressure on Argentina in regard to Turkey's nuclear ambitions. Fear and pressure of those countries caused the agreement to slow down its progress, and later the agreement to build a research reactor was cancelled by the Turkish Atomic Energy Authority (ATEA).<sup>141</sup> Further projects were discussed throughout 1997 and the 2000s with other foreign firms, including the Korean Atomic Energy Research Institute (KAERI), for determining and

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<sup>138</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey's Quest for Peaceful Nuclear Power," *The Nonproliferation Review* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 34-5.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>140</sup> Bowen and Kidd, "The Nuclear Capabilities and Ambitions," 66.

<sup>141</sup> Kibaroglu, "Turkey's Quest for Nuclear Power,"

evaluating Turkey's nuclear development and possible contractors, but these efforts came to halt also because of Turkey's economic problems.<sup>142</sup>

Too many attempts and failures, on the other hand, supplied Turkey with a well-educated cadre of Turkish scientists, scholars, and technicians in the fields of nuclear engineering and nuclear physics. Turkey can be argued to have a nuclear weapon production capability, as Bowen and Kidd highlight in their article:

Almost all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle have been examined in Turkey except uranium enrichment... Turkey appears to have one facility capable of engaging in conversion activities, a fuel pilot plant at the Cekmece Nuclear Research and Training Center.... Relevant experiments have been conducted at several universities in Turkey, with research undertaken to understand the properties of nuclear fuel and the process of fuel fabrication.<sup>143</sup>

However, common wisdom depending on open sources suggests that a nuclear-capable-Turkey is unlikely, given the openness of Turkey's nuclear research program, small uranium reserves, and lack of enrichment and reprocessing capabilities and especially international pressure. In this regard, it is difficult to believe that Ankara could develop a weapons program in the near future as long as Turkish leaders keep their rationality in governing the country.<sup>144</sup>

## **2. Reinforcement of Conventional Capabilities**

Absence of mutual consulting on strategic issues with the United States after the 2003 Iraq War, implications of Turkish-Israeli cooperation in Arab world, the relatively diminished trust in NATO and complicated membership with the European Union along with its lack of commitments to Turkey's security perceptions, and the country's strong commitment to non-proliferation and the challenging road to nuclear weapons will inevitably force Turkey to undertake serious precautions to improve its conventional capabilities to deter a nuclear Iran.

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<sup>142</sup> Bowen and Kidd, "The Nuclear Capabilities and Ambitions," 68.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 67-8.

<sup>144</sup> Kibaroglu, "The Risk of a Nuclearizing Middle East."



Most Turkish officials and elites relied heavily on protection from NATO and its main burden sharer, the United States.<sup>145</sup> Being a member of NATO, Turkey watched WMD proliferation in a relaxed but deliberate manner, and sometimes this relaxed view extended to the denial of threats, as in the case of Saddam's Iraq and Syria.<sup>146</sup> But the 1990–1991 Gulf War changed this deliberate perception rapidly, because when Turkish Prime Minister Ozal asked for a rapid-response force from NATO against a Scud missile threat, the Patriots (anti-missile defense systems) arrived too late and most of the Belgian fighter planes were not active for a rapid response. On the other hand, the first Gulf War also affected public opinion, which started to gradually voice its concerns on defense-related matters. Successful interceptions of most SCUD missiles by Patriots over Israeli air space have showed the need for addressing the missile threat for Turkish Armed Forces. Until that time, Turkey's military buildup was thought to be enough to deter and defend against any attacks that would emerge from Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Although Turkey was not attacked during the first Gulf War, the outstanding increase in missile ranges forced Turkey to think twice about its conventional deterrence capabilities.<sup>147</sup>

An exclusive indication of this perception is Israel's cooperation and collaboration in defining a new strategy for Turkish Armed Forces with increased mobility, forward abilities, endurance, and the capability of rapid intervention in crises. With a large part of its budget dedicated to defense expenditures, despite the fact that this has been debated by the public recently, Turkey still enjoys a formidable military power in comparison with its neighbors. This superiority, however, is still far from addressing the strategic and tactical missile threats from its neighbors, in this case, Iran.

The 1998 Iran tests of the Shahab-3 ballistic missile with a range of 1,300 km and a payload of about 750 kg raised questions, especially in Israel, which is well within range of the missile.<sup>148</sup> Likewise, Turkey felt threatened. Besides, Iran is claimed to be

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<sup>145</sup> Efraim Inbar, "The Strategic Glue in the Israeli-Turkish Alignment," in *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Regional Power*, eds. Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 118.

<sup>146</sup> Lesser, "Turkey, Iran and Nuclear Risks," 103.

<sup>147</sup> Kibaroglu, "NATO: Before and After," 45.

<sup>148</sup> Silahcioglu, *the United States, Israel-Iran Problem and Turkey*, 85.

developing Shahab-4, with a range of 2,000 kilometers and a payload of 1,000 kg. Shahab-4 is reported to be a multi-staged missile that will be capable of executing a ballistic trajectory to stress the Israeli Arrow missile defense. This missile, if used with lighter payloads, is believed to be able to target all of Western Europe.<sup>149</sup>

Turkey, in response to those threats, would choose to counterbalance Iran with proliferation of medium-range ballistic missiles; however, such policies would have serious implications to its multilateral alliances and its close neighbors. Turkey's current defense modernization on its early warning and missile defense systems, which aims detecting, tracking, and intercepting and striking capabilities, is already an attractive security phenomenon for Russia and especially Greece. Therefore, Turkey's decision and quest for medium-range missile capabilities would be regarded with alarming concerns from Russia, Syria, and Greece.

In the line of defense policies within NATO, Turkey might choose defensive systems rather than offensive. A military modernization program is already in progress, including F-4E fighter modernization with improved air-to-ground capabilities, four airborne early warning (AWACS) systems, Popeye-II air-to-ground precision stand-off missile co-production and the purchase of additional tanker airplanes. On top of that, Iranian improved missile threats might force Ankara to think more seriously about theater missile defense systems.<sup>150</sup> Although there is still no significant progress in the theater missile defense system concept of Ankara, a nuclear Iran will definitely accelerate such defense options.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

For almost fifty years, Turkey has been exposed to proliferation developments on its borders and nuclear weapons deployed on its territory, both because of having borders

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<sup>149</sup> Richard Speier, "Iranian Missiles and Payloads," in *Iran's Nuclear Weapons Options: Issues and Analysis*, ed. Geoffrey Kemp (The Nixon Center 2001, monograph-online), <http://www.nixoncenter.org/publications/monographs/Iran's%20Nuclear%20Weapons%20Options%20-%20Issues%20and%20Analysis2.pdf> (accessed 29 November 2007).

<sup>150</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, (Washington D.C.: CSIS, July 2001), 31-35.

with potential nuclear states such as Syria and Iraq and because of having lived under the protective umbrella of NATO, mainly supported by the United States in the Cold War era.

Although not being a nuclear state and not likely to become one in the near future, Turkey is highly aware of the instability of the Middle East; however, Turkey's current policy approach to Iran, which is believed to be proceeding to a nuclear weapon level, is not defined yet and does not have yellow or red lines dissuading Iran. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's statement that "The continuation of Iran's nuclear program for peaceful ends is a natural right, but it is impossible to support it if it concerns the development of weapons of mass destruction" does not give any indication of how Turkey will act against the situation. Additionally, then president Abdullah Gul's statements about not permitting and giving support to any kind of military prevention within Turkey's borders discourage the United States and Israel for facilitation but do not explain how Turkey's behavior would be in consideration of sanctions.

If ambiguity is a determined state policy, then Turkey's current stance has nothing to do with regard to persuading Iran not to proceed to the next level; however, if ambiguity is a source of not knowing what to do, then more troubled and bloodier days could be on the borders of Turkey in near future. Thus, Turkey must choose its stance and take necessary precautions for different scenarios. Trying to become a friend to everyone is a strategy that most probably will leave Turkey alone one day.

## **IV. IMPACT OF A MILITARY INTERVENTION ON IRAN FOR TURKEY**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

During the Cold War, Turkey felt the communist threat explicitly due to its border with the Soviet Union. Its strategic location increased its relations with the West and Turkey became a member of NATO. The dissolution of the Soviet Union reduced direct contact with the communist threat from Turkey's eastern border. In the early 1990s, it was argued that without a Soviet threat, Turkey would not be an important ally in the West's defense. Owing to the emergence of new states in Central Asia and oil politics in the Middle East, however, Turkey drew attention again with its central location between Europe and the Asia, especially after the 1990–1991 Gulf War.

The Gulf War brought importance to Turkey's political environment; at the same time, costs became too much for Turkey to bear. A Kurdish contingency in Northern Iraq became a playground to the PKK for staging attacks on Turkey, and Turkey lost its former economic partner—Iraq. These factors, as well as the insufficient compensation that Turkey received after the war, made Turkey worried about another war on Iraq in 2003. European allies' opposition to the Turkish proposal enacting Article IV in order to invoke properly Article V when necessary showed Europe's and namely NATO's loose commitments to its member security in the Middle East. The U.S. disappointment about its troop deployment from Turkish soil to northern Iraq and, afterward, the detainment of Turkish Special Forces—the hood incident—in Sulaymaniyah by U.S. forces deteriorated Turkey-U.S. relations.

Although both the Turkish and U.S. governments focused on revitalizing the bitter tone of relationship, the absence of U.S. commitment to stopping PKK terrorism in northern Iraq has maintained its significance. Economical, political and military impacts of the two Gulf Wars had profound side effects on the Turkish political elite, and this has made Turkey think twice before acting and supporting unilateral U.S. actions or coalitions with Israel, especially when they involve hot conflicts with Turkey's

neighbors. This chapter will attempt to answer why Turkey feels reluctant to participate in a possible military strike or to facilitate U.S. and Israeli operations to Iran in order to roll back its allegedly nuclear-weapons program. Then Prime Minister Abdullah Gul's reiterated statements about not supporting any hot conflicts adjacent to Turkey's borders are seen as an explicit stance of Turkey against any intervention on Iran. On the other hand, Turkey's heavy defense reliance on the United States and strategic alliance is argued to leave little space for such emotional attitudes from Turkey.<sup>151</sup>

## **B. IMPLICATIONS OF THE TWO GULF WARS**

Along with Turkey's increased political importance in the West, the Gulf War also had negative effects, especially in the realm of economics and security. Both pre-war and after-war economic sanctions had detrimental affects on Turkey's economy. The Iraqi Kurds have made considerable progress toward their dream quest of establishing a de facto Kurdish state in Northern Iraq with the indirect help of United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 and protection of the Allied Poised Hammer forces on southeastern Turkish soil.<sup>152</sup> The costs were too much for the fragile Turkish economy, which did not get any significant aid after the war. Likewise, the Iraq War in 2003 caused concerns and had more important implications than the Gulf War of 1991. Loss of trust became an important issue to European allies of NATO. Compensation from another war on Iraq was also important and not handled clearly in negotiations with the United States. Turkish denial of basing U.S. troops on Turkish soil disappointed the United States and caused a tension between the two allies. While stabilization of fragile Iraq is vital for the United States, the U.S. is not doing enough about PKK camps located in northern Iraq from the Turkish perspective. This complicates the Turkish foreign policy toward the

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<sup>151</sup> Fulya Ozerkan, "Turkish-US Military Ties Leave not Much Room for Emotions," *Turkish Daily News*, 16 July 2007, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=78378> (accessed 3 December 2007).

<sup>152</sup> Michael M. Gunter, "A de facto Kurdish State in Northern Iraq," *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1993), 295.

region. For these reasons, the economic impact of two Gulf Wars and Turkey's security-related perceptions help in identifying the reason for Turkish reluctance for another war in the Middle East.

## **1. Economic Implications**

The first and immediate effect of the 1990–1991 Gulf War was the loss of Iraq's economy for Turkey. During and especially after the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq was normally Turkey's most important market in the region. Likewise, Iraq was also dependent on the pipeline from Kirkuk to Yumurtalik for transferring half of its oil exports.<sup>153</sup> With the U.N. Security Council Resolution 688 economic sanctions against Iraqi government, and oil that was formerly being exported to Turkey was being smuggled between Turkish oil-truckers and Iraqi Kurds. Though the real amount of smuggling through the Habur border—the only functional border during the war—where over 800 oil-trucks were passing through in a day, was difficult to estimate, the effects were believed to be tremendous for the Turkish oil economy.<sup>154</sup>

The exact amount of the costs to Turkey in the Gulf War is far from certainty because of the diversity of the aspects included in different estimates; however, it's argued that sole price for the war was at \$3.4 billion. In other words, it was 4.9 per cent of Turkish GNP.<sup>155</sup> But the overall cost that included economic sanctions, loss of revenues from the oil pipeline, uncollected bank loans given to Iraq, stopped export to Iraq, and sharp decline in truck transportation created great social and economic problems. Moreover, construction, trade, and tourism revenues decreased after the first Gulf War. Considering all these costs, State Minister Kemal Dervis asserted that Turkey's economic losses were between \$40 billion and \$45 billion.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> William Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis," *Royal Institute International Affairs* 68, no. 4 (Oct., 1992): 682.

<sup>154</sup> Silahcioglu, *The United States, Israel-Iran Problem and Turkey*, 16-17.

<sup>155</sup> David Seddon, "The Gulf Crisis: Counting the Costs David Seddon," *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 51 (1991): 77.

<sup>156</sup> "Derviş: Körfez Savaşı'nda 45 Milyar Dolar Kaybettik," *Milliyet-Ekonomi*, September 25, 2001, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/09/25/ekonomi/eko07.html> (accessed 2 December 2007).

In this sense, the consequences of the war were more devastating for Turkey than Ozal had foreseen. Iraq was an important market for Turkey's exports, and terminating its economic relations due to the U.N. sanctions affected Turkey's economy. The 2003 Iraq War had similar effects on Turkey, with increased PKK terrorism resulting in over a hundred deaths of Turkish truck drivers. Any attempt to intervene in Iran would be a reminder of the Iraq War and economic sanctions for Turkey, who has bitter memories concerning the past. The possibility of losing its important gas source—Iran—would prevent Turkey from engaging in harsh policies for a rollback on Iran's nuclear program. Being a main supplier for the Turkish energy market, Iran also sends a considerable amount of its people to Turkey as tourists and serves as a primary pillar for Turkish trade with Central Asia.<sup>157</sup> At a broader level, the Turks also have serious reasons for concern about the negative impact that growing regional tensions and the possibility of conflict would have on foreign investment and, consequently, on the management of the growing Turkish current accounts deficit.

## **2. Security Implications**

Saddam's Anfal operation to mass murder Iraqi Kurds by destroying their villages and using poisonous gas on them forced the United Nations Security Council to adopt Resolution 688 calling for an immediate end to repression of Saddam's government. In addition, a response force was established in Turkey's southeastern region and a no-flight-zone was formed north of the 36th parallel. The area north of the parallel was also off limits to Iraqi soldiers in order to protect Iraqi Kurds from Saddam's regime.<sup>158</sup>

Turkey under the administration of Ozal supported the U.N. Resolution to defend Iraqi Kurds against Iraqi aggression. Ozal's other idea was to utilize Iraqi Kurds against PKK terrorism in Northern Iraq; thus Turkey became the close supporter of Massoud Barzani in the stabilization of Northern Iraq after in 1992. Iraqi Kurds dependent on Turkey's support would be diverted from establishing a Kurdish state thus eliminating the

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<sup>157</sup> Ciftci, *The Us-Turkish Alliance at the Iranian Junction?* 5.

<sup>158</sup> Gunter, "A de facto Kurdish State in Northern Iraq," 295.

danger of PKK ethnic nationalism. Another reason for Ozal's support on the issue was to prevent another Kurdish refugee problem by having influence over Iraqi Kurds if Saddam was to oppress the Kurds again.

The Kurdish refugee problem became a challenging issue, because in no more than two weeks 500,000 refugees were piled up to the borders of Turkey. Remote valleys and mountainous territory further made the conditions difficult for humanitarian aids.<sup>159</sup>

Another implication of the first Gulf War to Turkey's security was the destabilization in northern Iraq. The turmoil between Barzani and Talabani forces along with PKK terrorism turned northern Iraq into a problematic region for Turkey. Turkey claimed that Iran as another outsider exploited the lack of authority in northern Iraq and supported the PKK with weapons, training, and economic aid and accommodated many PKK training camps on the Turkey-Iran border.<sup>160</sup>

However, in aftermath of the 2003 Iraqi War, Iran made a big turn in its foreign policy toward the region, as well as Turkey, due to the fact that Iran and Syria were concerned about potential Iraqi territorial disintegration in the future. In this regard, Iran relieved itself from thinking about Turkey's claimed goal to reach and control the oil fields of Mosul and Kirkuk.

In contrast to the U.S. policy of isolating Iran from the political arena in the Middle East, Turkey after the 2003 Iraqi War has chosen to improve its ties with Iran, fearing the emergence of a Kurdish state. The emergence of a Kurdish state is not acceptable to Turkey, Iran, or Syria; because their territorial integrity would be in danger if an independent Kurdish state tacitly or exclusively spurred ethnic Kurdish nationalism by demanding soils from these states.

### **C. TURKEY'S CONCERNS ABOUT U.S. RELATIONS**

Until the 2003 Iraqi War, it was not common to come across "Anti-Americanism" in Turkish literature, except among writings of Turkish extreme leftists who perceived

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<sup>159</sup> Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis," 687.

<sup>160</sup> Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations*, 15.



U.S. policies as imperialistic. However, the Bush administration's war against global terrorism, with its exaggeration of the alleged ties between Al-Qaeda and Iraq, had controversial effects on the Turkish public. Europe's legitimacy concerns about Bush's war plans on Iraq were also reflected in Turkey.

The United States, being accustomed to seeing Turkey as a close supporter in the region, was surprised at the Turkish vote to deny U.S. troop deployment to Turkey in order to attack Iraq from the north. In fact, the denial was also a surprise for Turkish security elites. The Islamist view of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) had affected the vote against the authorization of troop deployment, because many of the AKP deputies thought that the United States was waging a war against Muslims in the world.<sup>161</sup> Another factor for the JDP was said to be its inexperience and absence of guidance from the military elite on the issue. In this context, the Turkish military was accused by U.S. officials, Chief of the Turkish General Staff Hilmi Ozkok responded by stating that the "Security Council was not charged to advise parliament and pressuring parliament 'would not have been democratic'."<sup>162</sup> The United States' disappointment caused it to maintain its harshness against Turkey, since the decision on the vote was seen among the major reasons why the United States faced continuous post-war difficulties.<sup>163</sup>

Later, detainment of Turkish Special Forces by U.S. forces led to unprecedented anger among the Turkish populace. The Turkish press was not late to exploit this incident; however, Turks who showed great respect to the military already found the U.S. actions indecent and dishonorable.<sup>164</sup> The Kurds in northern Iraq took advantage of Turkish antipathy toward the United States. Another clumsy attempt was made by the Erdogan government to vitalize relations by a second resolution, but this attempt was turned down by the Bush administration.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, Iraq: Turkey, the Deployment of U.S. Forces, and Related Issues (RL31794, 2 May 2003) by Carol Migdalovitz, <http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/crs/permalink/meta-crs-8186:1> (accessed 29 November 2007)

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ciftci, *The Us-Turkish Alliance at the Iranian Junction?* 2.

<sup>164</sup> Kibaroglu, "The Risk of a Nuclearizing Middle East."

<sup>165</sup> Ciftci, *The Us-Turkish Alliance at the Iranian Junction?* 2.

In this context, in the face of recent PKK terrorist attacks on Turkish civilians and soldiers in the southern borders of Turkey, there was discontent that the United States did not stop the PKK from deploying from northern Iraq. Another sentiment among the Turkish public claims that the United States shows reluctance to put an end to the PKK's existence in northern Iraq, and this is seen as an indicator that the United States is using the PKK for creating domestic unrest within Iran in preparation for a future military intervention on Iran. Although such a claim is denied by both governments and is seen as far from reality, U.S. unwillingness to seek support from Turkey in such an intervention or rejection of Turkey's intermediary role between Iran and the United States is perceived as confirmation to that claim.

#### **D. TURKEY'S CONCERNS ABOUT ISRAELI RELATIONS**

Turkey's threat perceptions rising from PKK and Syria's alleged support, along with Israeli concerns rising from Islamic fundamentalism, increased the military partnership and collaboration on security issues between the two countries. Despite the fact that such close support was far from being called a strategic military alliance, the close cooperation on economic, political, and military issues created a combined effort showing their cautious security stance in the Middle East.<sup>166</sup> This accorded stance became effective in breaking close Greece-Syria ties in the late 1990s.

In the aftermath of the 2003 Iraqi War, however, political relations between Turkey and Israel changed considerably. While Turkey sees the emergence of an independent Kurdish state as an imminent threat to the stabilization of the Middle East and its domestic structure, Israel is seen to be enjoying the idea. Such an idea, though speculative, would be enjoyable to Israel because a military cooperation to build a forward defense line — especially against a nuclear-Iran with a newborn Kurdish state in northern Iraq — would generate a new strategic ally. A Kurdish state established with support of Israel would be dependent on Israel for its vital needs. Such dependency

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<sup>166</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 49.

would provide Israel considerable advantage to manipulate the newly emerged Kurdish state for its crucial stance in the region.<sup>167</sup>

It is not known for sure how these speculative perceptions affect weakened relations, but Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan censured Israeli policies toward the Palestinians and condemned Israel with “state terrorism,” referring to the assassination of Hamas leaders.<sup>168</sup> Harsh response came from an Israel official after Hamas visited Turkey, asking, “How would you feel if we got together with Abdullah Ocalan?” The JDP’s sensitivity to the Palestine problem might be seen as consistent with the party’s political view; however, their military’s attendance at Israel’s 56th anniversary with only a low-ranking general — in contrast to previous celebrations — is a clear indication of tense relations, especially resulting from Israel turning a blind eye, if not supporting PKK terrorism in northern Iraq.<sup>169</sup>

The “Kurdish Jews” or (Jewish Kurds) are believed to be an important factor as to why Israeli officials are relatively disregardful of Turkish security concerns in northern Iraq.<sup>170</sup> Those Kurdish citizens who emigrated from Iraq to Israel long before might explain the current Israeli attitude against Turkey, because their investments in Iraq might require such a supportive attitude to the region; however, as Kibaroglu argues, the main reason is claimed to be the deterioration of Turkey-U.S. relations.<sup>171</sup> Turkish denial of U.S. troops basing on its soil caused significant changes to Washington’s war planning on Iran and this also changed Israeli perceptions.

In any case, it is acknowledged that there is a divergence on Israeli and Turkish policies toward security concerns of the Middle East of the near future, and a Kurdish ally, in contrast to Turkey, might be enjoyable to Israel and the United States. Though speculative, it would be more practical for Iraqi Kurds and to reach a mutual consensus in

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<sup>167</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Clash of Interest over Northern Iraq Drives Turkish-Israeli Alliance to a Crossroads,” *The Middle East Journal* 59, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 247.

<sup>168</sup> Banu Eligur, “Are Former Enemies Becoming Allies: Turkey’s Changing Relations with Syria, Iran, and Israel Since the 2003 Iraqi War,” *Middle East Brief*, no. 9 (August 2006): 4.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Kibaroglu, “Clash of Interest Over Northern Iraq,” 248.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 248-9.

the region with Israel than with Turkey. Emergence of an autonomous Kurdish state would support Israel to establish forward defense line against a nuclear Iran, and this advantage would reduce Israeli military deficiencies and allow Israel to conduct independent military operations when needed for its vital interests. Turkey, being affected adversely from shifted Israeli security policies, would consider closing its political distance with Iran and Syria provided that Turkey lost its faith in the West and its long-standing ally—the United States.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Economical, political, and military impacts of the two Gulf Wars had profound side effects on the Turkish political elite, and this makes Turkey think twice before acting and supporting unilateral U.S. actions or coalitions with Israel, especially when they involve hot conflicts with Turkey's neighbors. The same reasoning applies to the Turkish policy approach assessing a military intervention on Iran. A Turkish decision on a military strike will be affected by Turkish security perceptions in the region. The Middle East is a highly destabilized region where state perceptions can change in short periods of time.

Turkey's case after the first Gulf War indicates that Turkey's increased importance brought both opportunities and constraints. Turkey's foreign policies gained momentum and broke its status quo after the 1990–1991 Gulf War. Turkey's value to Europe and NATO reached higher levels, and at the same time this was the first challenge for Turkish multilateral commitments, because a Kurdish refugee problem, along with its implications, also supplied Turkey a window of opportunity to employ policies out of the country. However, inconsistent and restless policies concerning northern Iraq, absent from sustainable economic power projections, made Turkey lose this opportunity. Still, the Turkish Armed Forces has adapted itself to irregular warfare against terrorism with relative success; northern Iraq has become a playground for the PKK with the support of neighboring countries. Turkey's economic problems were behind its inconsistent policies, and this did not help Turkey in its rivalry with Iran in Central Asia.

The next challenge was to the NATO alliance in the 2003 Iraq War. The controversy of the American war on terrorism raised suspicions about its legitimacy, and the solidarity of NATO was fundamentally diminished. Though this does not mean an antitrust in NATO, Turkey feels less secure, since the commitment of Europe has openly showed itself in the Iraq War. Turkey's decision not to become involved in the war is still debated, yet the diminished strategic level of U.S.-Turkey relations is far from any debate. Turkish-Israeli divergence is another problematic aspect resulting from the war, and Iraqi Kurds are closer to an autonomous Kurdish state than ever. In light of these two major events, it is simple to predict that waging, participating, supporting, or countering a war for a nuclear rollback on Iran's program would be a more demanding task. The real question then is the readiness of Turkey. Turkey, rather than standing aside and waiting to see what happens next, must have something to say and must act in advance according to its values along with its capabilities.

## V. CONCLUSION

A nuclear Iran, with its important strategic position in the Middle East and its threat against Israel, would pose a great danger to peace and stability in the Middle East. The capability of mass destruction would provide Iran with incentives to alter the delicate balance of power, and this situation is not acceptable for Turkey's security. Still, Turkey was exposed to proliferation developments on its borders and nuclear weapons deployed on its territory in the Cold War because of having borders with potential nuclear states such as Syria and Iraq. Although not a nuclear state and not likely to become one in the near future, Turkey is highly aware of the instability of the Middle East.

The absence of conflicts with Iran since the seventeenth century has been maintained by a delicate balance of power based on mutual economic, political, and military parity between the two states. But, if Iran develops nuclear weapons and adopts more assertive policies against Turkey, that delicate balance will cease and give Iran more incentives to use its nuclear deterrence as political leverage in its relationship with Turkey. This thesis identifies the key issues that shape the Turkish relationship with Iran and assesses the potential political, economic, and military threats that will emerge from Iran's nuclear quest.

The different adaptations of Islam and political struggle became the main reason for hostility and rivalry for regional hegemony between the Ottomans and Persia until they reached a subtle and durable agreement in 1639. After World War I both Turkey under the leadership of Ataturk and Iran under Reza Shah followed almost the same revolutionary pattern. But Shah's bid for promotion of Western values in Iran never reached the same level as the revolutionary and secular character of Ataturk's ideas. The Cold War era and Soviet expansionism caused the stable relations to become consolidated. Both countries feared Soviet incursion and its expansionist external policies and thus adopted cooperative strategies and strengthened their ties with the West, especially with the United States.

On the other hand, post-revolutionary Iran was not the same Iran that Turkey recognized and adjusted to in the height of Cold War threats. Islamic traditionalism was in formidable practice in Iran with Ayatollah R. Khomeini. The Khomeini regime showed its explicit intention to promote the values of post-revolutionary Iran, and this promotion extended beyond Iran's borders. Turkish claims about Islamic fundamentalism being supported by Iran, and Turkey's discontent about the PKK, influence competition in Central Asia and Caucasus, and form a great possibility for a hot conflict if Iranian officials consider weapons of mass destruction as a credible deterrent against Turkey.

Iran's revolutionary ideologies were deeply affected from contemporary practical affairs and external political and economic situations in the international arena, causing inconsistency in Iran's international behavior and restricting the success of revolutionary influence on other Muslim communities. However, a nuclear-weapons-capable Iran might feel confident about its own national security and focus its undivided attention on exporting its Islamic revolution.

Continuous PKK attacks on Turkish soil, and Turkish military operations that extended beyond its borders in pursuit of remnant PKK guerillas, became a tense issue for Iran. Although both Turkey and Iran are concerned about the potential Iraqi territorial disintegration that would result with a Kurdish state in the North, the PKK-related crisis shows that the two countries are in fact very close to the hot conflicts. In any escalated scenario, Tehran might view nuclear weapons as leverage or compensation for its conventional disabilities. If Turkey coerces Tehran with limited use of force or harsh sanctions, as it did in 1995 and 1999, Iran might feel the need to use its WMD capabilities to preempt or prevent a Turkish incursion into northern Iraq or might threaten Ankara covertly or exclusively to strike strategic targets within Turkey.

A nuclear Iran, relying on its WMD and advanced missiles capabilities, might pursue an aggressive stance in its policies toward its neighbors in Central Asia or in the Caucasus. Seeing itself as a nuclear power, Iran might feel more confident and exercise more assertive policies against Turkey. It is certain that a nuclear-weapons-capable Iran would gain more political bargaining power over Turkey on energy and economic issues of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Turkey has adopted a soft diplomacy approach against Iran's nuclear program. But this ambiguous diplomacy against nuclear weapons does not provide a clear definition of Turkey's policies and actions to deter the development of weapons of mass destruction by Iran in the region. Israel is the main hard-liner in Iran's nuclear debate. The United States, as an ally and close supporter of Israel, shares the same perception and poses a determined stance for an immediate solution. The European Union is more cautious and prefers diplomacy first; however, diplomacy and its most coercive method of sanctions for a rollback also yield its limitations, since the European nations have considerable trade with Iran. Internally, Turkey might choose to start its own nuclear weapons program or increase its own conventional defense capabilities to counterbalance Iran.

Close ties with the United States, and Israel's active participation in Turkey's defense modernization, might lead to Turkey's facilitating American and Israeli intervention in Iran; however, Turkey officially declared that it will not support a military operation that would result in hot conflicts adjacent to its borders.

The European Union can be argued to have a great influence on Iran's behavior in regards to its nuclear program; however, sustained international cooperation and support for sanctions against Iran is highly challenging. France, Germany, Italy, and the U.K will probably face difficult choices in adopting economic sanctions on Iran, because their current economic relations with Iran are so important for their own prosperities.

Turkey's wariness about NATO's reliability, especially regarding Article V contingencies, would propel Turkey to think about its internal counterbalancing options, especially if Europe maintained its demanding and unyielding attitude in accepting Turkey's participation in the EU and did not commit itself to defending its would-be member Turkey's vital security concerns in the near future in the Middle East.

A nuclear-capable-Turkey is unlikely, given the openness of Turkey's nuclear research program, small uranium reserves, lack of enrichment and reprocessing capabilities, and especially international pressure. In this regard, it is difficult to believe that Ankara could develop a weapons program in the near future, as long as Turkish



leaders keep their rationality in governing the country. Additionally, Turkey's security perceptions, the country's strong commitment to nonproliferation, and the challenging road to nuclear weapons will inevitably force Turkey to undertake serious precautions to improve its conventional capabilities to deter a nuclear Iran.

Being a close neighbor to the Middle East, Turkey must define its political approach to Iran, reconsider its balance of options, if necessary, and be ready for the harsh consequences of a possible intervention against Iran, remembering the last two Gulf Wars and their deteriorating effects on Turkey's security and economy.

Turkey's current policy approach to Iran, which is believed to be proceeding to a nuclear weapon level, is not defined yet and does not have yellow or red lines dissuading Iran. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's statement that "the continuation of Iran's nuclear program for peaceful ends is a natural right, but it is impossible to support it if it concerns the development of weapons of mass destruction" does not give any indication of how Turkey will act against the situation. Additionally, then president Abdullah Gul's statements about not permitting or giving support to any kind of military prevention within Turkey's borders discourage the United States and Israel for facilitation, but do not explain how Turkey's behavior would be in consideration of sanctions.

If ambiguity is a determined state policy, then Turkey's current stance has nothing more to do in persuading Iran not to proceed to the next level; however, if ambiguity is a source of not knowing what to do, then more troubled and bloodier days could be on the borders of Turkey in near future. Thus, Turkey must choose its stance and take necessary precautions for different scenarios. Trying to become a friend to everyone is a strategy that may result in Turkey being left alone one day.

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